

THE HEALING OF SOULS

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS





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The Healing of Souls

A Series of Revival Sermons

By
Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.

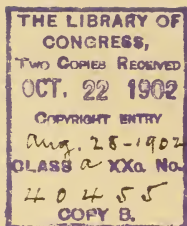
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To My Friend
the
Rev. WILLIS P. ODELL, D.D.
this volume
is affectionately dedicated

THE AUTHOR'S GREETING

THE sermons contained in this book were all preached in Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, New York City, in a series of revival meetings held during the month of January, 1902. The themes had been selected long before, and illustrations and references gathered during several months previous, but each sermon was finally fused in the midst of the campaign, while the blood was hot and the nerves tense with that greatest of all spiritual excitements which the true preacher ever knows.

Each of these sermons has had set upon it the approbation of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls. Night by night, throughout the entire month, the divine benediction so rested on the earnest proclamation of these simple Gospel messages that some three hundred souls were persuaded during the month to confess Christ as their personal Saviour.

The sermons are printed practically as they were delivered, with the hope that wherever they go they will carry to readers, and especially to preachers of the Gospel, something of inspiration and sugges-

tion and illustrative help that will strengthen the evangelistic power of every man or woman into whose hands they may come. Thus hoping that the few hundreds of souls won on the personal delivery of these sermons may be multiplied into thousands through the printed page, they go forth followed by the author's tender and devoted prayer.

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

New York City, June 18, 1902.

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THE HEALING OF SOULS

I

JESUS THE SINNER'S SAVIOUR

Thou shalt call his name Jesus : for he shall save his people from their sins.—*Matthew* i, 21.

SIN is the horror and the nightmare of the world. It is sin which lays a withering blight on the joys of a home and leaves them blackened with the cruel touch of hell. It is sin which lays its despoiling hand on fair youth and thwarts all its promise of noble manhood or holy womanhood. It is sin which has filled the cities with corruption and made in them, here and there, deadly swamps and treacherous quicksands, where men and women sink down into despair every day in the year. It is sin which has covered the earth with wars and cruelty. And it is because Jesus Christ comes to the world, daring to deal with sin, to attack sin at its citadel, that he has caught the eye and the ear and aroused the hope of mankind.

Christ would be no Saviour worth talking about if he could not save men from their sins. To save a man in his sins, and leave their stain and foulness on him, would mean nothing. There can be no real salvation that does not save us from our sins. That is what Christ came to do, and that is what he is doing all the time.

First of all, Christ delivers us from the penalty of our past sins. This is something that we cannot do for ourselves. If we had never sinned in all the history of our lives we would only have been doing our duty, and after we have sinned against God there is nothing we can do which will merit the setting aside of sin's penalty. It is something that no one among our fellow-men can do for us. A mother cannot redeem her own son, though God knows many a mother would be willing to do it at the price of her life. A mother came to me not long ago and told me how her son was wandering away from God, and how sin was despoiling his life and ruining him soul and body. And that woman said to me, with her face wet with tears and her hands clinched together, "How gladly I would 'die for him if I could set him back again the same pure and wholesome boy that he was ten years ago!" But all that mother's love had no power, and can have no power, to pay the penalty of sin and make it possible for sin to be pardoned. But

“God so loved the world” that he gave Christ to die for us and redeem us. He was God’s own Son. He had no sin of his own to account for. He came to stand in our place, and offer himself as a sacrifice for us. Peter says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Christ suffered for us that he might save us from the one great cause which makes men suffer. It is sin that has brought suffering into the world, and every cruel, bitter heartache that the world has known has somewhere come from that one source. Men try to make themselves happy while all the time they carry in their own hearts the sin which brings them under condemnation to the penalty of God’s broken law and makes happiness and peace impossible. Jesus Christ is the One, and the only One, who can certainly give peace to every human heart, because through his death and suffering he has conquered the great source of our suffering and our sorrow.

Dr. Arthur Brooks tells how there once stood in proud seclusion one of the steepest peaks in the Alps. Men looked at it and said that human foot could never scale its heights. Bolder spirits tried every way which they could devise, but still there towered above them that inaccessible point. At length a wiser, more experienced eye was turned to that very side which had been pronounced evi-

dently impossible; and as he thus faced what had seemed the most despairing side of the problem he saw that the strata of the earth below, broken sharp off in the upheaval of that majestic peak, furnished a series of steps which made possible a passage directly to the summit; and now every year even inexperienced feet make their way over the path thus opened.

So human philosophers knew not how to solve the problem of human sorrows and cure the heart-ache and bring peace to the soul; but Jesus Christ found the way. He came, the Just One, and the Holy One, with no spot upon him, and he died, the just for the unjust, and through his stripes we may be healed. I am able to preach to you tonight the possibility of the forgiveness of your sins and the pardon of all your past transgressions only because Jesus Christ came into the world and took upon himself your flesh and bore your sorrows and your sufferings and was tempted in all points like as you are, and yet in it all was without sin, and finally went to the cross and died there, a cruel death, not because he had sinned, for there was not one sin in his record, there was no condemnation hanging over his head, but he died for you, that he might redeem you and make it possible that, pleading his name and his merits, you might have the forgiveness of your sins.

Surely it is not possible for any one of you to contemplate this without it touching the fountain of tears and arousing in you the sort of gratitude that will lead you to give love and open confession to the Christ who died in your place.

Once a company of men who had taken part in a rebellion and had been captured were sentenced to have every tenth man shot, to deter others from like conduct. Among these were two, a father and son. They were drawn up in a long line. The first man and every tenth man thereafter was marked for death. The father and son stood together, and as the son ran his eye along the line he discovered that his father was a doomed man. He realized what it would be to have their family left without a head, his mother a widow, the old home stripped of its life and joy, and, quick as thought, he made his father change places with him, and a moment later he fell in his stead. He became his father's substitute. And do you wonder that in after years the father could never speak of that son except with a quivering voice and tear-wet eyes—the son that took his doom and died in his place? So there came a time when you were doomed, and all our race was doomed, because of sin; and then Jesus came and stepped in your place, and he took the smiting that was meant for your shoulders, he took the spear in his heart that was

meant for you, and he died in your place. Is there no love in your heart to-night that rises up to return gratitude and loving confession to the Christ that died to redeem and save you from the guilt and punishment due for your sins?

Nothing stings us to the heart more than to feel that one for whom we have suffered and toward whom we have shown great love should be ungrateful. But you have known about Jesus and about his deathless love for you, some of you for many years, and yet you have lived as though you did not know it, or, if you did know it, as though you did not care. How unnatural that is! How unworthy of you! If any one of your acquaintances had risked his life to save you, you would be ashamed of yourself that you did not show him more gratitude than you have shown to Jesus.

The Duke of Orleans, father of Louis Philippe, the last king of the French, was on one occasion out riding, followed by his servant, who was also on horseback. The Duke had safely crossed an old bridge over a rapid stream, but when his manservant was following the bridge gave way and horse and rider were thrown into the river. In a moment the duke leaped from his horse's back, plunged into the stream, and with considerable peril and difficulty succeeded in saving the drowning man and bringing him to land. As soon as he could

rise, all dripping as he was, the man threw himself full length at his master's feet, and promised him that the gratitude and service of a lifetime should show the sincerity of his love and thanksgiving for the great mercy that had been shown him.

O my friend, when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, then Jesus came out from the heart of God and dared suffering and loneliness and insult and anguish and death to save you. And now, to-night, I beg of you that you give him your love, that you give him your open confession of gratitude and thanksgiving, and on this first night of the new year let all the world know that henceforth by the grace of God you will put this redeemed life of yours at the service of your divine Lord.

Jesus not only saves from the penalty of sin, but he is able and willing to save from the power of sin. O, how sin tyrannizes over men! There is no tyrant on earth so terrible as sin. Sin makes men do things that shame and disgrace them in their own eyes and in the eyes of people they love best. How many times men have said to me about certain sins: "I am a slave. Over and over again I have promised myself and my wife and my best friend that I would do right; but when the deadly spell is upon me I am driven like a man handcuffed to his dungeon. I wallow in my sin, and I cannot

help it." It is an awful thing for a man to get into a situation like that. And if I speak to some who are not Christians, and yet feel that this is an exaggerated statement, I warn you to flee your sins now and find freedom from them before the terrible shackles are fastened down upon your soul. And if there is anyone here to whom what I have been saying does not seem exaggerated, because you are already yourself suffering from this terrible tyranny of sin, I bring the good news to you, and I would to God that you could hear it with new ears to-night, that Jesus Christ is able to set you free. How clearly Paul reasons it out in his letter to the Romans. He says: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto

sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you."

That is the great freedom which I offer you to-night through Jesus Christ your Saviour. Some of you have been reared under the most earnest Christian influences, and I doubt not that for some of you loved ones have been sending up their prayers to God this very day. New Year's Day is a day when every praying mother thinks about her absent children, or her wandering ones, and pleads with God for their salvation. O, that all such prayers might be answered to-night!

A few weeks ago in England the preacher in a large mission hall noticed a great broad-shouldered sailor coming in and taking his place in the congregation. He came in late, after the service had begun, and at the close, when an invitation was given to an after-service, the sailor came into the inquiry room. He hailed a Christian man at the door, and said, "Look here, mister, does that preacher mean what he says?"

"Certainly," was the rather curt reply.

"And do you think the Lord Jesus would save me to-night?"

"Of course, if you are willing," said the gentleman, in a softened tone, for he was beginning to

feel an interest in the big fellow standing before him and questioning him so eagerly.

"Willing! I am that, and I'd like it settled straight away."

"Would you like to see the minister?"

"Aye, I should that, if he wouldn't think it too much trouble to come."

Very soon the preacher was at his side, and the sailor was saying:

"I had no thought of being here to-night, parson. I've been an unthinking fellow since I left home and my old mother, two and a half years ago. Such a saint mother was, and a widow too; and I her only lad. Not that I've been as bad as many of my mates by a long chalk, thank God; but that's all because I couldn't get away from thoughts of her and her prayers. But I've never written to her, nor sent her money when I've earned good wages, and many a time I've drunk just to get rid of my uneasy thoughts, and to-night I was feeling down-right miserable, and I set off for a bit of a spree; but as I came down the street past the hall, the singing sounded just heavenly—I used to be in our choir at home—and I just longed to come in and have a good sing in decent company once more; and I got into the porch, and had my hand on the door, and then I remembered that I had never changed nor washed myself, and I was back in the street like

a shot, thinking I would match the 'Green Dragon' better than a place of worship. But somehow, try as I would, I could not get away from that door and that singing! Such a pull as I never felt before in my life was dragging me back again. I tried to bargain with myself that I'd have a decent rig-out and put up an appearance next Sunday; but it was no use, and before I well knew what I was doing I was up the steps, in at the door, and stuck fast in a seat; and very soon I knew from your discourse that it was the Lord that had been calling me, *and that he wanted me*; and he's softened my heart, and if only he'll help me I'll be a good lad and go home to mother."

The preacher talked and prayed with the big sailor until his faith beheld Christ as his Saviour and the light of heaven broke into his soul. And as he shook the preacher's hand, heartily, Tom Mellor—for that was his name—exclaimed, joyfully, "Aye, but I've got a comfortable feeling at my heart! I have for sure! And next Saturday I'll be off to see mother, and try to make up to her for all the trouble I've given her."

Now, it happened that on Wednesday of that week this preacher was conducting a service in a smaller town many miles away, and during his sermon he told of the big sailor's conversion on the Sunday night. As he came down from the pulpit

he was met by a respectable-looking old woman who tremblingly asked him if he knew the name of the sailor, and when he told her she exclaimed, "I thought so! *That's my boy!*"

And then the dear old mother told the minister how on the previous Sunday she had thought with even more than usual yearning of her wandering boy, and then had set out for the evening service. But her shawl was thin and her steps feeble, and when she had gone about half the distance she encountered a heavy storm of rain and sleet and turned into a friend's house for shelter. She, also, was a widow, and a woman of earnest piety and strong faith, and was very prompt in her suggestion that, as it seemed impossible for either of them to attend public worship that night, they should have a little prayer meeting all by themselves instead; and, knowing her friend's great anxiety about Tom, she proposed that he should be the special subject of their prayer. And at that very hour, in a city many miles away, the prodigal was led to his Father's house, and the poor widow, though her eyes were still holden concerning the deliverance, saved out of her distress.

Are not some of you who hear me morally certain that this day prayers have been going up in your behalf? Let those prayers be answered to-night in your salvation!

II

THE LIGHT THAT CONDEMNS

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. —*John* iii, 19.

WE shall be judged according to our light. No man will be judged worthy of condemnation who has lived up to the light which God gave him. Condemnation comes when a man knows better than he does. God will be entirely just with us. If we are condemned at last it will be because, having seen the light and known the better way, we refused to enter that way and turned our faces toward the darkness. It is the terrible folly of sin that it often leads the sinner to refuse the light that would lead him to salvation. This is true of doubt. A man excuses himself for not becoming a Christian because he cannot believe certain great Christian truths; but he will not act on the truth he does believe, which would lead him into all truth. Down at the bottom he does not wish to believe, because his belief would bring condemnation on himself. The man who honestly doubts, and who is really willing to find the truth, is never kept long away from the light of salvation. Take

the case of Thomas, who was in that first group of friends of Jesus when he was on earth. When the other disciples came and told Thomas about the resurrection of Christ he did not believe it. He thought they had been deceived. Yet his heart was heavy and he really wished it were true. But he could not understand how it could be, and he declared that he would not believe unless he could put his own hands into the wounds of Jesus. Not long after that Thomas was with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them, and when, instead of reproaching Thomas, Jesus accepted his terms and said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing," all Thomas's doubts went to the winds. The very sight of Jesus was enough to convince Thomas. He did not go to the length which he had demanded, but instead he cried out with loving faith, "My Lord and my God!"

Now in Thomas you see an honest doubter who accepted the light when it came to him, and when he was convinced did not hold out for a moment, but immediately acknowledged his Lord. You have a very different case in those men who put Stephen to death. As Stephen urged home upon them the prophecies which made it clear that Christ was the true Messiah, and that they had put to

death the Saviour of the world, Luke, who writes the account, says, "They were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."

The men that murdered Stephen believed what he said. The light from heaven had shone upon their eyes, but the light condemned them, and they would not have it, they would not accept it. They could not have helped but admire the angel-like face of Stephen if it had not condemned them. In that trying moment Stephen looked upward and the heavenly world opened to his eyes. He saw God seated upon the throne, and he saw Jesus, his Saviour, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He forgot all the rage that was around him, the cruel taunt and the stinging blow, and he cried out, in infinite joy, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." And those men, looking on Stephen's face, believed it. They knew he was looking into heaven, for they saw light in his face brighter than any light of earth. But they could not yield to the fact that he saw Christ, the Crucified, he whom they themselves had crucified, in ascended glory, for that meant condemnation to them. And so they did what many men have been doing ever since—they "stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city." How infinitely wiser it would have been to have kept

their ears open ; for the Christ who when hanging on the cross prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," would not have refused his intercession and forgiveness to these wicked men now if, seeing the light, they had welcomed it and turned from their sins.

This, then, is our great message to-night: Follow the light which God gives you and it will lead you to heaven. It does not take a great deal of light to lead heavenward one who is willing to be led.

(There was a Bohemian gypsy girl who was very beautiful, and who, on account of her remarkable perfection of features, was employed by a great German artist to sit for him as a model. In his studio she saw an unfinished painting of the Crucifixion, and asked him who "that wicked man" was and what he had done to deserve such punishment. The artist smiled at her ignorance, and told her that the man nailed to the cross was not wicked, but good ; indeed, the best man that had ever lived in the world. From that time, the girl's interest in the story of the cross never ceased. She never came into the studio that her first look and her last were not given to that picture of the crucifixion. She was utterly untaught, and it was by her questions—rather grudgingly answered by the painter, who had no real Christian sympathy—that she got her

first knowledge of the Saviour of mankind. She felt the artist's lack of feeling, and wondered at it, and one day when this was more than usually apparent she said to him:

"I should think you would love him, if he died for you."

The remark fastened itself in the artist's mind. The death of Christ had appealed to him as a pictorial tragedy. The divine life of Jesus had never touched him. The ignorant Bohemian girl had presented the subject to him in another way, and it would not let him rest until he sought religious counsel, and before long became a servant and a sincere worshiper of the crucified Christ.

Under the inspiration of this new love for Christ he took up the picture which had attracted the girl's attention, and finished it. It was hung in the Dusseldorf gallery, with this inscription:

"I did this for thee; what hast thou done for Me?"

Some time afterward, going to the gallery, he found the Bohemian girl, who had been the cause of his own conversion, weeping in front of the painting. This time he could speak to her as a Christian.

"Master," she sobbed, "did he die for the poor Bohemians, too?"

"Yes, he died for all."

And that very hour the crucified Saviour gained another disciple in the Bohemian girl.

A few months later, dying in a gypsy camp not far from the city, the girl sent for the artist, and thanked him.

"I am going to him now," she said, joyfully. "I love him, and I know he loves me."

Years afterward a frivolous young nobleman looked on the same picture, and the study of it and the rebuking pathos of its inscription, "I did this for thee; what hast thou done for Me?" so moved and influenced him that he consecrated himself to the service of God. The young nobleman was Count Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravian Church, and the man who wrote the hymn,

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

He wrote also that other hymn,

"I thirst, thou wounded lamb of God,
To wash me in thy cleansing blood;
To dwell within thy wounds; then pain
Is sweet, and life or death is gain."

How many more that picture won to Christ we can never know. But see from how small a flame all this glorious result was kindled! How much more light you have had than had that poor girl!

And yet you are still in the darkness, with no consciousness that your sins are forgiven, going the deeper into the darkness as the years go on. O my friends, if you will only take the light you have to-night, and do as well as you know, here and now, it will lead you to the light of perfect day,

Dr. A. C. Dixon tells of a prosperous worldly man whose Christian wife had died praying for his conversion. He was lying awake in the darkness of his room, one night, when he heard a voice from a little bed at his side, "Papa, it's so dark, take my hand." He took the little hand extended in the dark, and held it gently until the frightened child dropped asleep. Then this strong business man looked up through the darkness, and said, "Father, it is so dark; take my hand as I have taken the hand of my dear child. Give me rest of soul for Jesus' sake." Peace entered his broken heart, and he rejoiced in full salvation. A little beam of light had come to him in his child's appeal to him in its weakness and fear. The sense of helpless weakness had led him to stretch the hand of his soul up to God, and Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, was the hand by which God took hold and saved him in a moment. Lift your hand up into the darkness to-night, trusting God through Jesus Christ, and he will take hold upon you, and save you, for Christ is able "to save them to the utter-

most that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

But if you refuse this light which I bring to you, and turn from it, you must needs enter into the deeper darkness that can only mean sorrow and still greater sorrow as the years go on. It is a terrible thing to grow old without God and without the precious comforts of an unfailing hope and a certain assurance of a happy immortality.

A gentleman tells about meeting on the street a man who was nearing his fourscore years. His body had all the marks of age. His shoulders were stooped. He walked tremblingly with a cane. His voice was husky, his hair was white, his eye was dim, and his face had the furrows which time and trial had plowed upon it. And yet his face was joyous, and there was about the old man an atmosphere of gladness and hope. As he came up with him he was humming the tune of a buoyant hymn, and as he slowed up by his side the gentleman said, "Why should an old man be so merry?"

"All are not," said he.

"Well, why, then, should you be so merry?"

"Because I belong to the Lord."

"Are none others happy at your time of life?"

"No, not one," said the old man, earnestly. "No man is happy at my age without God. The devil has no happy old men."

And I press that home upon you young people, and you middle-aged men and women. The devil has no happy old men or happy old women. It is not possible that a man or a woman should come to the end of life with no title to heaven, with no fellowship with God, with no certain hope in Jesus Christ, and have happiness and peace. O my friend, if the light of the Gospel which I preach to you to-night condemns you, I pray you do not turn from it on that account, but turn toward it that you may know the truth and that the truth may make you free. You may be saved here and now, if you will live up to the light you have. During the civil war an officer in the Union army, having received his death wound, was visited in the hospital tent by the chaplain, who inquired if he was prepared to meet his God. He smiled, and said: "Chaplain, I was once passing through the streets of New York on Sunday, and heard singing. I went in and saw a company of poor people. They were singing, 'There is a fountain filled with blood.' I was impressed profoundly, and it came to me as a personal message, and right then and there, while they sang, I gave my heart to God. Since then I have belonged to God, and have served him. Death has lost its terror for me." You may come to Christ just as readily if you will. Come to him now!

III

TREASURES THAT CANNOT BE STOLEN

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal : for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—*Matthew* vi, 19-21.

A WISE traveler never carries much money with him while on his journey. If he be a man of wealth and expects to engage in large operations in the country to which he is going, he will carry with him a draft that will be serviceable at his destination, or he will have treasure forwarded so that he may have it to draw upon when he arrives. To carry large sums of money on his person would only subject him to unnecessary care and anxiety, and also put him in constant danger of being robbed, and quite possibly of losing his life in order that he might be robbed. Our journey through this world to the eternity beyond is fairly described by that illustration. While we are passing through the world we constantly need sufficient of the goods of this world to pay our way on our journey, but the money and treasure which worldly men value here will be of no use whatever to us when we arrive

at our final destination. It would be very unwise for us to invest all our time and strength in acquiring wealth which we cannot carry over the boundary line of death, and which if we could would be worthless. If a man were going to San Francisco or to London from New York he would hardly think it worth while to carry paving stones with him, or gateposts, as a matter of treasure. But in heaven the streets are paved with gold and the gates are studded with jewels. There could be no greater folly than for men and women, journeying so swiftly toward eternity where an endless life awaits, to squander all their time gathering treasures which can only serve to make a tombstone, which is often a monument of folly at the last.

Especially is this folly apparent when we are told by the Lord Jesus that it is possible for us to transfer spiritual treasures to the heavenly shores and to carry with us a draft on the Bank of Heaven, so that we shall not come to the shores of immortality bankrupt exiles, but may have a mansion fitted for us there. We may have treasures there that no moth can corrupt, that no thief can steal, and that can never be taken from us. One of the most beautiful things that Christ has told us is that it is possible for us to turn the gold of this world into heavenly treasure if it is gained and used in the spirit of love for him. The love that ministers

in his name to the hungry and the naked and the sick becomes divine gold that shall be put to our account in the Bank of Heaven.

A young Swede who was a poor stable boy, a hostler in a Western livery stable, went up to Alaska a year or two ago, and prospered. He has just given a hundred thousand dollars to endow a Western college. When a home missionary asked him what he was going to do with his money, when it first began to come in in large amounts, the young fellow said, "I mean to do more for the world than the world ever did for me." That was a splendid answer, and spoken in the spirit of Christ, and the man who gives in that spirit transmutes his gold into heavenly coin.

Mrs. Farningham tells of a poor woman in England who was called to make a long journey to visit her sick son. She could ill afford the expense, and yet she could not stay away from her boy. She had money for a third-class ticket to where he lay ill, but how would she get home again? But a mother's heart will take risks, and she went to the station, and as she went up to the ticket office she saw a gentleman who seemed to be watching the people as they passed up for their tickets. A porter stood behind him carrying the man's bag. The gentleman looked at her with a searching but kindly glance, and then dropped in next behind her. He, too,

bought a third-class ticket. The porter looked on with disapproval. He thought it a mean thing for so fine a gentleman to travel third-class. He stepped up to the gentleman. "First-class, sir?"

"No, third."

The woman was nervously walking up and down the platform, looking at the carriages. The gentleman opened one. "Are you going on?" he inquired, kindly. "There is room here."

"Thank you, sir."

He got in after her, and was soon taken up with his newspaper. At first the poor woman was so delighted at being really on the way to her son that all other thoughts were banished, but presently the harassing question intruded itself again. She wondered how she was to return, and her face grew pale and disturbed.

The gentleman, who had noticed the anxiety in her face at the ticket office and had suspected her poverty, began a conversation with his fellow-passenger:

"Are you going far?"

His manner was gentle and sympathetic, and before long he was in possession of the facts. They were both silent afterward until his destination was nearly reached. Then he slipped a piece of gold into her hand. "It is a habit of mine to travel third-class, and give the difference between the cost of the

first and the third to anyone in the carriage to whom a little help seems acceptable," he said.

"What a beautiful thing to do," said the woman, looking at the money in great amazement. "Do you mean this is for me, sir? Why, it is the cost of my return ticket. I did not mean to beg when I told you about my boy and my savings. You know I am doing it for love's sake, and—"

"Yes, I am doing it for love's sake, too. Good-bye. I hope you will find your son better."

Who doubts that that piece of gold was transmuted into heavenly wealth? It was given for love of Christ, and no gifts in his name, given for love's sake, fail of recognition.

A lady in Scotland, whose husband had left her a competence, had two profligate sons who wasted her substance with riotous living. When she saw that her property was being squandered she determined to make an offering to the Lord. She took twenty pounds and gave it to the London Missionary Society. Her sons were very angry at this, and told her she might as well cast her money into the sea. "I will cast it into the sea," she replied, "and it shall be my bread upon the waters."

The sons, having spent all they could get, enlisted in a regiment and were sent to India. Their positions were far apart, but God so ordered that both were stationed near good missionaries. The elder

one was led to repent of sin and embraced Christ. He shortly afterward died.

Meanwhile the widowed mother was praying for her boys. One evening, as she was taking down her family Bible to read, the door softly opened, and the younger son appeared to greet the aged mother. He told her that he had turned to God and Christ had blotted out all his sins. Then he narrated his past history in connection with the influence the faithful missionaries had had on his life; while his mother, with tears of overflowing gratitude, exclaimed: "O, my twenty pounds! My twenty pounds! I have cast my bread upon the waters, and now I have found it after many days."

From the treasures which we store up in heaven we get a most precious income while we are traveling through this world. One of the noblest treasures that anyone can ever have in this world is a sincere and faithful friend, a friend that can always be depended upon for sympathy and comfort and congenial and loving fellowship. There are a thousand things that may interfere with earthly friendships, but there is a friendship which you may make, and you may begin it this very night, which nothing save coldness or indifference on your part can ever interfere with, and a friendship which will give you more joy and comfort of soul than any other friendship you could make on earth.

Mrs. Browning once asked Charles Kingsley to tell her the secret of his marvelous character and life. "What is the secret of your life? Tell me," she said, most earnestly, "because I wish my life to be beautiful like yours." And the noble Kingsley answered her in five words. They were, "I have had a friend." Ah, yes, he had a friend! He had made friends with Jesus, and whenever he was tired or overburdened he sunned himself in conversation with his Friend. When he was overborne by the world's sorrow which he was trying to lighten, and when he was tempted to lose his faith in men and lose the hope of making them better, he went to his Friend, and his faith and hope grew strong again. Christ is willing to be just such a friend to you. Ah, we shall need him! We need him always; but there come to every one of us times of sickness and pain and disappointment when Jesus is the only friend who can come to our relief. How glorious then to have a tender and loving friendship with him.

One of the noblest men this country has ever seen was Major Whittle. A little while before he died, during a sleepless night, when he could not sleep for the pain, but while Jesus kept his heart bright and joyous with sweet fellowship, he wrote a little poem suggested to him by the chimes of the bedroom clock that announced the going of the hours to him. Lying on his sick bed, he wrote:

"Swift with melodious feet,
The midnight hours pass by;
As with each chiming bell so sweet
I think, 'My Lord draws nigh.'

"I see heaven's open door,
I hear God's gracious voice;
I see the blood-washed round the throne,
And with them I rejoice.

"It may be that these sounds
Are the golden bells so sweet,
Which tell me of the near approach
Of the heavenly High Priest's feet.

"But the Lord remains the same,
Faithful he must abide;
And on his word my soul I'll rest,
For he is by my side.

"Some midnight, sleepless saints,
Made quick by pain to hear,
Shall join the glad and welcome cry,
'The Bridegroom draweth near!'

"Then shall I see his face,
His beauteous image bear;
I'll know his love and wondrous grace,
And in his glory share.

"So sing my soul in praise,
As bells chime o'er and o'er,
The coming of the Lord draws near,
When time shall be no more."

If we have this friendship with Jesus Christ, God promises that we shall be fellow-heirs with Jesus, and all the treasures of the heavenly world will come

to us. We get everything through Jesus. Give your heart to Christ in sincere love, thus winning his forgiving love in return, and all the treasures of a glorious immortality are yours.

A quaint childless old man died leaving much wealth, and although careful search was made no will could be found. After a while the house furniture was put up for sale. An old woman was present at the auction who had once been nurse to the old man's only son, till the angels called him away. She had loved the boy dearly, and when a painted portrait of the little fellow was put up for sale quite a curious sensation came into her throat.

"Who bids?" cried out the auctioneer.

"O, I wish I could!" sighed the poor woman, "but I have only a shilling, and it will never go for that."

It was a very poor sort of a picture, and no one even bid a penny.

"Please, sir," the poor woman ventured to say, "I will give a shilling for it, but I could not give more, as that is all I have."

"A shilling is bid," cried out the man; "anything further?"

No one said anything, and so the picture was knocked down to the shilling bidder.

When she got the picture home she took it out of the frame to clean it, and there was the old man's missing will, and it read something like this: "Who-

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ever buys my son's portrait shall have all I possess ; for perhaps some one will buy it who loved my son." Thus the poor old woman became rich, and all through the love she bore the old man's son.

God's heart is the heart of a father also, and Jesus said, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

Make friendship with Jesus to-night, and you shall have treasures better than any the world can give, and treasures from which death cannot rob you ; treasures which will safely pass the judgment seat ; treasures that shall enrich your soul, and fill heaven with joy and welcome for you throughout eternity.

IV

THE POISONED SPRING

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness : all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.—*Mark* vii, 21-23.

WE cannot but recall those other words of Jesus in which he declares that a good life comes from a good heart, and a bad life comes from a bad heart; that the heart is like a fountain: if it be bitter, then the waters that fill the stream cannot be sweet; if the spring be poisoned, then the life will be deadly. And in our text Jesus distinctly declares that the heart which is poisoned and perverted by sin is the immediate and direct source of all these vile sins which are mentioned here in our text. The solemn message which I have to bring you this evening is no matter of speculation or theory of my own. I bring you the solemn statement of Jesus Christ, that the center of sin is in the heart itself. Unless the heart be purified there can be no assurance of a good life, but a certainty that the life will finally be evil.

The world has always been trying to reach respectable and honorable living by a short cut. A

man finds that certain sins are disgracing him and shaming him, and he undertakes to lop off those sins. He does not take into consideration that the cause for these sins is in the love for sin in his own heart, and that the only real cure is to have his heart cleansed of that love for sin.

Human nature is just the same now as it was in the days of Paul. Paul found it impossible to do right while there was in his heart a love for sin. He says that he found the good that he wanted to do—that is, the good that appealed to his judgment and his reason and his higher nature—he did not do; and the evil thing which his judgment told him was wicked and disgraceful, and which he determined not to do, he still found himself doing. He discovered that the secret was that the fountain of his heart was poisoned by sin. He was like a man who had chained about his neck a dead body, and he could not do as he would. The only way that salvation could come to him was by setting him free from that body of death, by purifying the heart that loved evil things, and then his judgment and his reason were brought into harmony with his affections and desires, and all were under the dominion of Christ. So completely was this so that Paul was able to say, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

I doubt not I am speaking to some who have de-

terminated to do better. You have been looking back over your life, and you are not satisfied with it, and you have come to the conclusion that you will break with some habits, and you will hold yourself more completely in line with better things. Yet you will fail unless the heart is changed. The fountain in your breast must be cleansed or it will overcome all your determination. Christ makes nothing more plain to us than this, that the fountain of sin is in our hearts. It is a poison of the blood, a curse that smites the will, that paralyzes our power to do right. But, thank God, while sin is in us, it is not yet of us; it does not belong to us; it is not our true self; and it is the mission of Christ to cleanse and purify our hearts of it.

Sin is a foreign enemy in our hearts. Sin is a witness that we are a good thing that has been spoiled. The sinner is a prodigal in a far country, but he may be brought back home. "Man," says Pascal, "has all the signs of being a king dethroned." And as such I come to you, to urge upon you that you recognize the evil possibilities that are in your heart, and that you bring your heart to Christ that it may be cleansed and purified. It is not a small thing that I ask of you. Religion is not a thing like a coat that a man can put on or off as he will. I am not asking you simply to make good resolutions, I am asking you to turn from your sins,

and turn to Christ in obedience. The promise is, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I am asking you to repent of your sins—that is, to turn away from them; to give them up here and now; to break with them at once.

Right there is where many fail. They say: "Well, I'll think about it. Sin has complicated my life. It is not easy to break off at once, and say I will not sin any more. I will try and arrange my affairs and get ready to quit my evil ways and become a Christian." You cannot get ready in that way, and the minute you try to arrange things yourself by some sort of compromise, your treacherous heart, that got you into your sins in the first place, will betray you again, and you will be bound tighter than ever. You will sink the deeper into the mire as you flounder and try to get out.

No, the way to get out is not by floundering in your own strength. The way of escape is through surrender to Jesus Christ. He knows all the evil of your heart. He knows all the wicked complications into which your sin has brought you, and he alone knows how to cut the cords of evil that bind you in a hundred ways. Drop everything and come to Jesus. Throw yourself on his mercy; put yourself into his hands, and he will make an infi-

nitely better adjustment of all your difficulties than you are able to make yourself. Besides, he will cleanse your heart and purify your soul. He will kindle in you a love for good things and for pure things. He will pull your feet out of the mire where they are now sinking, and set them upon a rock, and will teach you to sing the new song of redeeming love.

Sometimes the devil keeps a man back by lifting his wicked habits up into his gaze, and he sneeringly says to him: "You are a pretty man to talk about being a Christian! You know you can't live up to it. You will only bring disgrace on Christian people and on yourself. Suppose you were forgiven for your sins, what would that amount to? It would not be two weeks till you would be sinning again." But the devil was a liar from the beginning. What he says might be true enough if God's forgiveness was like the forgiveness of man. The governor of a State may forgive a thief, and give him a free pardon, and send him out into the world again; but with the old habit strong upon him, and the old thievish propensity asserting itself in his heart, he will soon be back into the penitentiary. Jesus Christ does infinitely more than that. He not only forgives the man who, turning from his sins, takes hold upon him by faith, but with the pardon he gives him a changed heart. He

renews within him a right spirit. He is not only relieved from condemnation, but he is taken into friendship and fellowship with God and with Christ and with all good people, and angel visitors minister to him, and so long as he keeps himself in this loving association he is safe from all of the temptations to evil.

Christ saves you not by the negative method of simply putting you on guard to stand over yourselves, and watch for some evil appetite or passion or lust to lift its head like a serpent that has been hiding in the dark, and to strike it and drive it back again until another occasion offers. Ah, no; if that were all, a poor salvation it would be indeed. But Jesus proposes to cleanse your hearts, not that they may be left empty, but that instead of the vile registry of visitors which are written down here in our text there shall be a new registration of tenants in your soul. Love, and hope, and faith, and joy, and peace, and patience, and gentleness, and generosity, and humility, and courage, and truth, and honesty, and holiness shall come and dwell in your hearts, and a life of gladness and helpfulness shall be carried on there, a positive life of goodness.

Now I know that, as I speak to you, there is something in your hearts that answers to it. You do not belong to the devil; you are not made for sin and evil; you belong to goodness; Christ is your

elder brother, and there is something in every one of your hearts that responds to all that I can say about God and his love and the heaven to which he invites you. You know that your home is not in the camps of iniquity. Your home is not in the far country with the swine. Your home is in the Father's house, and I come to you with this appeal knowing that for you to come back to God and forsake your sins is the most natural thing in the world for you to do. It is but coming home.

When the House of Commons, in England, adjourns for the night it is the regular custom for one of the officials to cry, "Who goes home?" But nobody pays any attention to his question in these days. It is an old custom which once was alive with meaning, but has no meaning now. In olden times it was very necessary, owing to the dangers in the streets from robbers and from the want of lights, for members going in the same direction to join company for protection, and they went together, well armed, and were lighted on their way home by a linkboy. But in these times of comparative safety and abundant facility for traveling all the old precautions are needless, and if members do leave the House of Commons together it is not for mutual protection, but simply for the pleasure of having each other's company by the way. Still, it is interesting that the familiar cry should be

continued, even though it has lost the meaning it once had.

The old custom, and the intense meaning that once illuminated it, ought to have a suggestion for us. The journey of life has many dangers. It is beset by robbers who outrage unwary travelers and steal from them all that is worth having. No man walks safely on this journey except he has the fellowship of Jesus Christ and the helpful association of Christian men and women who are also going home to heaven. And I come to you this evening, and I cry out to you, "Who goes home?" If you will come with us I am sure we will do you good. We will share with you the love of our Saviour, and you will find him, as we have found him, a sure defender in every time of need.

I wish I knew what to say to you to make you know how willing Christ is to take you, just as you are, with all your sins, and forgive you, and give you the gladness and the peace of a pure heart and the comfort of knowing that all your sins are blotted out and that God is pleased with you.

A while ago, in one of our New York city missions, where there is a medical dispensary, a Christian physician noticed a young man come into the consulting room. His dress and appearance was much like the others, but something in his manner,

and in the few words in which he described his illness, convinced the doctor that he was not a native of this city. After prescribing for him the doctor said, "You don't seem to belong to this neighborhood."

"No, indeed," was the reply, uttered in a tone of regret.

"Where is your home?"

There was a long-drawn sigh as he answered, "Three hundred miles away;" and the young fellow seemed to be thinking that in another sense he was still further off.

"Long since you left home?"

"Yes, sir, many a long month. I have traveled over all these States, and in California and Canada, and an awful rough time I've had of it."

"I don't doubt it, my boy. No place like home, is there?"

"Indeed, no, sir. I wish I was there now, but I'm in no condition to go."

The good doctor saw a chance to save a soul, and so he said, kindly: "It's a great comfort to think those difficulties don't keep us from going to Christ when we wish to, is it not? He would receive us in any condition, and without money, you know. Have you been to him to save you in the same way as you have come to me trusting in my power to cure you?"

"No, sir, I can't say I have ; at least not for many a day, though I was well brought up."

"Well, it is not too late to try. Christ will give you a warm welcome ; he likes to receive people who want to turn over a new leaf. Won't you try?"

"I will, doctor. You have spoken kindly to me, like my own father used to. I ought to tell you that the name I gave is not my right name." And, feeling that one who had been so sympathetic was entitled to the confidence, the lad gave the doctor his right name and the name of his native town.

The doctor appreciated this sign of confidence, and said: "I am glad you told me ; it may be the first step toward better things."

The doctor wrote to a friend he had in the same town, and the very next day a telegram reached him begging that the boy be sent home at once. All expenses would be defrayed and his aged parents would give him a hearty welcome.

Three days passed before the doctor could find the youth. He inquired among the men at the mission, but none of them had seen him. At last, on the third day, he walked into the consulting room.

"I heard you wanted to see me, doctor," he said.

"Yes," said the doctor. "Here is a letter for you. Do you know the writing?"

"That is my father's writing," said the boy,

staggering to a chair and tearing the letter open. As he read it the tears ran down his face.

"Well, it's a good job, is it not?" the doctor asked, as the young fellow looked up.

"Yes, sir, and thank God for it. They want me to go home at once, but I can't go this way. I must get some work, so I can get some better clothes. I would not like to go home in these dirty rags."

"But think of your mother watching for you, and your father going to meet the trains. You would not like to keep them waiting while you earn the money for new clothes. They want you badly, don't they? They know you are hard up."

"Yes, sir. I'll go as I am. It would not be right to wait."

"That's good. Now I want you to feel that way about Christ. Don't wait to clean up, but go straight to him as you are."

God had dealt so mercifully to him that the boy was ready and willing, and right there on their knees together, in that consulting room, while the doctor prayed, the boy gave his heart to Christ.

But there was no need to humiliate the boy and his family by sending him home in his rags. The kind doctor took him to his house and gave him a bath and fitted him out with a suit of clothes, and then put him on the train for home.

A grateful letter soon came from the father de-

scribing his son's reception. He and his second son had met him at the station, and gave him welcome; but that was nothing to the welcome he got from his mother when they reached home. She kissed him and wept over him and clung to him, and would not loose him until the neighbors, who had been called in, came to share in the joy of the reunited family. No such joyful meal had ever been eaten in that home.

That is what Jesus Christ is doing, and that is what God is waiting to do for you. Come to him just as you are. He knows your condition. He knows all your bad habits. He knows all your wicked thoughts. He knows all your sorrows. But he loves you, and he longs to save you. Come home! Come home, and come now!

V

NOT A PATCH, BUT A NEW SUIT

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.—*Matthew ix, 16.*

NOTHING could show more clearly the difference between God's way and man's way in dealing with the human heart and life than this plain but striking illustration used by our Saviour. Man is always resorting to religious patchwork. God is ever determined to clothe man anew with righteousness. Man is always seeking to patch up his habits and make his life look respectable and presentable without affecting the inner purposes which prompt life. But God is continually teaching us that such a patch is of no account so long as the secret springs of personality remain unchanged. Paul sets the matter very clearly before us in his letter to the Colossians when he says, speaking to people who have given themselves to Christ:

“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge

after the image of him that created him." There is no patchwork about that. Paul was urging upon these people a complete new suit in religious character and life.

I am sure there are many people who are nominal Christians who are cheating their souls and failing to live in joyous communion with their Saviour because, while they are willing to have their lives patched up and freshened in many ways, they have not surrendered themselves completely to Christ to do his will and follow him in all things. Christ cannot save us, he cannot transform and ennoble our lives, unless we open every secret closet of our hearts to him and permit him to work his will in us, cleansing us from all our sins.

Rev. F. B. Meyer tells us that there was a time when, though he was a nominal Christian, he realized that there was a secret sin which he cherished, and that it was keeping him back from Christ. And yet he wished to surrender himself to Christ; he longed for the forgiveness of his sins; his soul hungered and thirsted for communion with Christ. It seemed to him as though he offered to Jesus a bunch of keys, in which the keys of all the chambers of his heart were placed upon the ring of his will, except the key to one little room. It was a small room, and he hoped that Christ would not notice. He knew that in that private closet he was treas-

uring up what Christ could never permit, and so it was with uneasiness of heart that he placed his bunch of keys in the hands of the Master. Jesus looked at him with his searching eyes, those eyes that look down into the secrets of the soul as they looked into the heart of Zacchæus, and asked whether they were all there. He blushed a little, well knowing what the Master meant, and answered that they were all there but one, and that that was too insignificant to be worth his care.

The Master saw that he evaded him, and said, sadly, as he returned the keys to him: "I cannot take them. If you do not trust me in all you do not trust me at all. Besides, how can I keep you clean and pure while in that secret closet all manner of evil is constantly breeding?"

Mr. Meyer says he saw the truth of the words, but he thought he could not live without the contents of that secret chamber. He was conscious of an evil voice encouraging him in his refusal, and of unholy suggestions that, if he were to surrender all, there was simply no limit to the demands that might be made upon him. On the other hand, he knew that Jesus Christ had every right to have all the rooms in his heart; had the right to entire control of his life; and that Jesus meant only good to him. So finally he gave up the struggle and surrendered unconditionally to Christ, and told him

he was willing to give up the key. The key seemed to cling to the palm of his hand, against which it lay, beneath his clasped fingers, yet he was willing for Christ to take it, if he would. And it seemed as if the Saviour's face lighted with a smile of inexpressible joy as he took the offered hand in his and opened the fingers one by one. And so the Lord took the key that had been keeping him out of the one locked chamber of that young life.

As soon as it was in the hands of Jesus he went straight and unlocked the door. Then they looked in together, and the Master blushed for him, as Mr. Meyer says he did for himself. Then with his own hands the merciful Lord took up the evil thing and bore it without the precincts of his soul, and instead of his dying for lack of it, to his surprise he lost all desire for it. Jesus not only took away the evil thing, but he cleansed the place, opened a window in it which commands a view of heaven, and often the Lord comes and sits with him there beside that window, and they hold sweet communion together.

And so I am sure there are some of you who hear me who do not accept Jesus because you have not yet been deeply convicted of your sins. You have no deep and pungent consciousness of the awfulness of sin. If you could only know how evil your

sin is; if you could only see it with clear eyes, I am sure you would abhor it, and loathe it, and be ready for Christ to take it away. If, like Dr. Meyer, you would give the key of your heart to Jesus, and let him go and unlock the door that shuts in that secret sin, and look at it in the light of his faith, in the light of heaven which he would let pour into that room, I am sure that shame would mantle your cheeks, and you would cry out to your Saviour to cleanse your heart and your life from all sin.

We may be sure that only one kind of a character will pass at the judgment. We must all meet at the judgment seat of Christ and before the great white throne we must be judged. A patched-up character will not stand the test there. Sometimes you are very lenient, and excuse yourself, and say, "O, well, I think my life averages up pretty well. I think it's as good as many church members." Well, suppose it is. Jesus says that there are many church members that will not get into heaven. He says that many will come on that day and say, "Lord, have we not taken the communion; have we not been eating and drinking in thy name?" And he will answer, "Depart from me. I never knew you." O friend, these glib phrases about being as good as your neighbor will die on your palsied lips when you come to stand trembling before the great white throne to give your account. Noth-

ing then but the seamless robe of righteousness, made white by the blood of the Lamb, will stand the test.

There was a man in New Hampshire several years ago who very much prided himself on his own self-righteous morality, and expected to be saved by it. He often said: "I am doing pretty well, on the whole. I sometimes get mad and swear, but then I am strictly honest. I work on Sunday when I am particularly busy, but I give a good deal to the poor, and I never was drunk in my life." This man once hired a shrewd old Scotchman to build a fence around his pasture, and gave him particular directions as to his work. In the evening, when the Scotchman came in from his labor, the farmer said, "Well, Jack, is the fence built, and is it tight and strong?"

"I cannot say that it is all tight and strong," replied the Scotchman, "but it's a good average fence, anyhow. If some parts are a little weak, others are extra strong. I don't know but I may have left a gap here and there, a yard wide or so; but then I have made up for it by doubling the number of rails on each side of the gap."

"What!" cried the farmer, not seeing the point, "do you tell me that you have built a fence around my lot with weak places in it, and gaps in it? Why, you might as well have built no fence at

all. Don't you know, man, that such a fence is worthless?"

"I used to think so," said the dry Scotchman, "but I hear you talk so much about averaging matters with the Lord that it seems to me we might try it with the cattle. If an average fence won't do for them I am afraid that an average character won't do in the day of judgment."

Little fence
I am sure the old Scotchman was right, for it only takes one gap to let the stock into the meadow; it only takes one wheel broken in the machinery to render a great manufacturing plant inefficient; it only takes one rail loose on a railway track to wreck a train and put in danger a hundred lives; it only requires that one inch of wire shall be cut to render three thousand miles of wire useless. So it only requires one sin to let in the flood of evil; it only requires one patch on a man's spiritual life to show that all is unsafe and not to be trusted.

But there need not any of us go with patched characters, either here or hereafter, for our divine Lord is able to cleanse us from all our iniquities, to pardon all our sins, and clothe us in the white raiment of righteousness. He has again and again received the very chief of sinners, and he has never failed yet to save any man that has truly come unto him. He has taken the most vengeful and vicious people on earth and transformed them into the

most loving and gentle. A missionary in New Zealand called all his converts together for a season of fellowship, to close with the communion service. While they were kneeling around the Lord's table he noticed one man rising from his knees and returning to his seat, then, after a little while, coming back to the place of kneeling. After the service was over he asked him the cause of this strange conduct. The heathen convert said: "I suddenly found myself kneeling beside the man who murdered my father. I once vowed that if I ever saw him I would kill him. All this came over me, and I could not bear the sight or the thought. Then, in my seat, I seemed to see Christ hanging on the cross and to hear him pray for his enemies; and I heard a voice saying in my soul, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' I gladly forgave him in my heart, and received great peace and blessing." And Christ is able to take all the hate out of your heart; to take from you all those evil feelings that cause you so much happiness and unrest.

I do not appeal only to the motive of your own good. In behalf of your influence upon others I appeal to you to give your heart to Christ and let him make the best out of you. It may be that some of you have little children who are looking to you for an example. They may be your own children

or the children of your friends; but they look up to you and are influenced by your life.

An influential woman, the wife of a prominent lawyer, gave this account of her conversion:

“My little girl came to me and said, ‘Mamma, are you a Christian?’

“‘No, Fannie, I am not.’

“She turned and went away, and as she walked off I heard her say, ‘Well, if mamma isn’t a Christian I don’t want to be one.’”

That went straight to the mother’s heart, and she lost no time in giving her heart to Christ and putting her life where her child could safely follow. O, in God’s name I plead with you to take the safe path! Don’t let some one you love stand in the judgment and say, “If you had only used the right influence I would have been saved.”

But I not only plead for your influence over others, I plead for you to come to Christ because of the debt of gratitude you owe to him for his life and death given for you. One of our leading magazines gives this little story of an old man who is a puddler in a foundry in one of our cities and earns good wages. Twenty years ago the wife and mother died, and a little daughter of five became the old man’s pet. Twelve years ago he sold all his property and spent his money in sending her abroad to study music. She came back two years

ago, a fine singer and a matchless beauty, and refused to own her father. But the heart-broken old father has not turned against her, even though she has so richly deserved it. For he has moved into cheap quarters, and lives very niggardly himself, that he may have the more to send to her every week, though she neither sees nor writes to him. What an ungrateful wretch that girl seems to us! It made my blood tingle to my finger-tips with indignation when I read of such base ingratitude. And then my eyes filled with tears as I reflected that that is just the way multitudes are treating Jesus Christ, who came down to earth, putting aside the glory of heaven, and died for them on the cross that they might be saved. O, if you are standing in that place of ingratitude to-night, I entreat you do not stand there one more night. Come to Christ, repent of the years of ingratitude you have passed, and, entreating his forgiveness, find this night the joys of salvation. You may go to your homes this evening with your heart flooded with "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

VI

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.—
Matthew ix, 12.

THE Bible always treats sin as an invader which has come in from the devil's country. There is no sin in the normal, healthy condition of a human heart. Sin comes into our lives as does a disease, which fastens on the organs of the system and unless cast out preys and ravages there until we are destroyed. Sin comes when we give rein to qualities which, though good in themselves, when they become master instead of God bring us into folly and rebellion. Eve was led away when she listened to the serpent instead of to God. St. James describes to us the evolution of sin: "Let no man say," he says, "when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Christ comes as the Great Physician to heal the heart and soul of man from this worst of all maladies, the disease of sin. In the long story of the

human race there have been many physicians who have tried to prescribe for the sinner, but all have failed except Jesus.

At the World's Fair, in Chicago, in 1893, there were gathered together, in what was called the Parliament of Religions, representatives from all the great peoples of the world and from all the religions of the earth, and each one sought to present a physician who might cure the deadly disease of sin. The meeting went on for two days and at the close of a debate Dr. Barrows, who was in charge, turned to Bishop Arnett, a colored minister from the Southland, and said, "Bishop, what do you think about the model men of the world as compared with Jesus Christ?" And the good bishop said, "I feel like singing the old Methodist hymn:

'Jesus! the name high over all,
In hell, or earth, or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.'

Then Dr. Joseph Cook, who has recently gone home to heaven, said, speaking of the great certainties of religion, "Lady Macbeth hath blood stains on her hands," and he asked the representatives of each religion what they could do to remove those stains. He waited for an answer, and at last solemnly and with tremendous emphasis, which no man there present will ever forget, exclaimed,

“Nothing but the blood of Jesus!” The vast audience broke forth into applause—a reverent, rapturous applause—agreeing that there is nothing that can remove the stain of a guilty conscience, nothing that can heal the soul that is sick of sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ.

Christ is the one Great Physician able to heal not only the malady of sin, but to keep the soul in perfect health. He alone knows how to fill all the longings and aspirations of the human heart. There is an old poem in which the writer gives most beautiful expression to this thought:

“As pants the wearied hart for cooling streams;
As thirsts the traveler o’er the burning sand
For the refreshing shade and living spring;
As sighs the exile for the loved embrace
Of sire and mother-home and kindred dear,
So pants and sighs, O God, this heart of mine,
For thee and purity.

In vain the world,
Bedecked with fashion’s gaudy tinselry,
With winning smile, invites my laboring heart
To join her feasts of mirth to find content.
Ambition, too, has tried her artful wiles
To still with worldly hopes this yearning cry—
But all in vain. All earthly hopes are lost,
Are swallowed up by this deep soul desire.
All earthly happiness I count but dross,
And willingly, while still the earnest cry
And craving of my heart is holiness.
Why is this inward thirst, my Father, why
This deep, intense desire for purity;

This constant yearning cry of soul, 'Create
In me, O God, a clean, a holy heart,'
If in that fount for rebel sinners oped
I seek in vain for grace to purify?
Thou'st told me in thy word, 'The blood of Christ
His Son doth cleanse from all unrighteousness.'
O hast thou in thy word and promise failed,
Or failed in power? Hast thou, my God, inspired
Within this soul of mine a bitter thirst,
With naught to satisfy; a longing for
A good thou canst or wilt not grant?
My heart, the impious thought. It cannot be—
That blood for thee on Calvary's summit shed
Is full to-day, and free and powerful, all
To save, e'en to the uttermost, the soul
That comes with faith to lave beneath its flood,
In whom of old, a Peter, Paul, or John
Were 'cleansed,' made free by its all-healing power.
Take then, my soul, by humble faith the gift,
The blood-bought gift; no longer doubt its power
Or slight his love, but yield to him at once
Thine all, a willing, holy sacrifice.
So shall thy joy increase, and brighter far
Shall grow the light that shines along thy way,
Till in that land above, where all is love,
And joy, and purity, thy light is lost
In heaven's eternal day."

During Christ's life on earth he was a Physician of both body and soul. There was no sickness of the body, no disease of the mind, no ache of the heart but Jesus could make it whole. Christ had only to appeal to what he did as evidence of his mission. When John had been cast into prison, and, shut in by the four prison walls, grew lonely

and depressed and wondered whether Christ were indeed the true Messiah or not, he told some of his friends one day when they came to visit him in the prison, "Go, and see Jesus, and ask him if he is indeed the Messiah, or whether we shall still look for another?" These friends of John went on a day when there was a great gathering of the people to hear Jesus, and still more sick people who had either come or been brought by their friends that they might be healed. And when John's friends put to Christ the question of their leader, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Christ turned about, and looked at the great throng surrounding them, and said, kindly: "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard to-day. Ask these men and women what has happened to them. Look at that pile of crutches there, talk with the people who brought them. Look at those beds that were carried here with a man at each corner that are now laid aside as unnecessary. Look at that little girl over there standing by her father, the distinguished-looking ruler in the uniform of authority. He came to me one day in great haste, and thought his daughter was dying, and even while I talked to him the servants came and told him that she was dead. I told him not to worry, that she was not dead, but sleeping, and they all laughed at me with scorn; but I went

into the room and took her by the hand, and she arose alive, and see how well and strong she is to-day. See that man over there gesticulating to an acquaintance with whom he is talking. He is telling a man how his hand was palsied, and that when he met me I caused him to stretch it forth and it became whole. Look at that man who seems to be gazing up at something in the sky in a rapture of delight. That is a young man who was blind, and I opened his eyes. Go tell John the things you have seen and heard, that his heart may be comforted."

Now, Jesus, who was able to heal the maladies of men while he was here on earth, has not lost his power. He can still speak to the demon-possessed soul and set it free. He can still forgive sins, and cast out anger, and hate, and viciousness of spirit, and make men loving and cheerful and glad. He is the Great Physician of the soul. Give him a chance to heal thine. Christ wrought no miracles while he was here on earth more wonderful than the miracles of soul-healing which he is working now.

In a certain dyehouse, where there were a number of workmen who were very wicked, the foremost one in their wickedness was brought under the influence of some earnest revival meetings and converted. Two of his friends among the workmen

were so struck by the change that for a time they tried to act just as he did, and succeeded very well. The ridicule and scorn of the rest were, however, too strong for them, and they turned back to their old ways, while John, the real convert, clung close to Christ and stood firm as a rock. John did not say much, but he answered scoffs and ridicule by a consistent Christian life. One day, however, when his associates were boasting what good infidelity could do, and how much harm the Bible had done, his soul was stirred within him; he turned around, and said, feelingly but firmly: "Well, let us talk plainly about this matter, my friends, and judge of the tree by the fruit it bears. You call yourselves infidels. Let us see what your principles do. Now, there was Tom and Jem," pointing to the two who started out to do right and went back. "You have tried your principles on them. When they tried to serve Christ they were civil, good-tempered, kind husbands and fathers. They were cheerful, hard-working, and ready to oblige. What have you made them? Look and see. They are cast down and cross; their mouths are full of cursing and filthiness; they are drunk every week; their children half-clothed; their wives broken-hearted; their homes wretched. Now, I have tried Christ, and his religion, and what has it done for me? You know well what I used to be. There were none of

you who could drink so much, swear so desperately, or fight with such recklessness. I had no money, no one would trust me. My wife was ill-used; I was ill-humored, hateful, and hating. What has religion done for me? Thank God, I am not afraid to put it to you. Am I not a happier man than I was? Am I not a better workman and a kinder companion? Would I once have put up with what I now bear from you? I could whip any of you as easily now as ever. Why don't I? Do you ever hear a foul word from my mouth, or catch me at a public house? Go and ask my neighbors if I have not altered for the better. Go and ask my wife. Let my home bear witness. God be praised, here is what Christianity has done for me. There is what infidelity has done for Jem and Tom." John stopped. The dyers had not a word to say. He had used the logic they could not answer, the logic of his own experience and life. He had been a sick man, sick of the vilest sins, and he had met the Great Physician, and he had healed him, and he is able to heal you.

It is always waste of time for us to be specializing our sins, as though there was some aristocracy or caste about sin. There is not, any more than there is about consumption, or typhoid fever, or pneumonia. All sin has death in it. All sin will destroy your peace of conscience, bring you under

condemnation, and cause your banishment from God forever. There is only one way to get rid of sin, and that is to call in the Great Physician. The blood of Jesus Christ, and it alone, has power to cleanse us from sin.

An old blind man was taken to a hospital to die. His grandchild, a little girl, went every day to read to him. One day she was reading in the New Testament, and came to the words, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The old man raised himself up, and stopped the little girl, saying, with great earnestness: "Is that there, my dear?"

"Yes, grandpa."

"Then read it to me again—I never heard it before."

She read it again.

"You are quite sure that it is there?"

"Yes, quite sure, grandpa."

"Then take my hand and lay my finger on the passage, for I want to feel it."

She took the old blind man's hand, and placed his bony finger on the verse, when he said, "Now, read it to me again."

With a soft, sweet voice, she read, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"You are quite sure that it is there?"

"Yes, quite sure, grandpa."

“Then if anyone should ask how I died, tell them I died in the faith of these words: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ ”

With that the old man passed forever into the presence of the Great Physician, who had cleansed away his sin and made him pure.

O my friends, this is an auspicious time to call the Great Physician. Jesus is now passing by. Others are meeting him and are being healed by him of their sins and sorrows. Isaiah says, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Jesus is near to you now. Obey him, confess him, and he will heal and save you.

VII

GOOD CHEER FOR THE SINNER

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed : and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy ; Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee.—*Matthew ix, 2.*

THERE is always good cheer where Christ has his way. When the disciples were in the storm at night, and had given up hope of ever reaching land again, Christ came walking to them over the rolling waves with his ringing, “Be of good cheer ; it is I ; be not afraid.” The waves were caressed into peace, and the stormy winds were stilled, and the peaceful stars shone forth in the sky when Jesus came. Again, when those same friends were oppressed and discouraged at the massing host of difficulties that seemed to threaten them with failure, Christ’s same joyous note of courage rang out, “Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.” And it is this same encouraging word which Jesus utters to this poor palsied man who has been brought to him for treatment. Christ has cheer for him, not only for the paralysis that has handicapped his control over his body, but in his power to free him from the deadlier paralysis that has been growing on heart and soul.

The palsy of the soul is the most terrible thing that can come to any of us. To be away from God, to be without hope of heaven, to have no real fellowship with Jesus Christ our Saviour, and yet to be comparatively indifferent about it, to have a growing indifference to spiritual things, is the saddest and most pitiable disease of sin that can fall upon a human heart. I do pray God that he may grant us his Spirit, that the word to-night may reach whatever sensitive spot there is left in your heart, and quicken you to repentance and faith and decision ere it is forever too late.

In the medical records in Paris there is an account of a man who was attacked by a creeping paralysis. Sight was the first to fail; soon after, hearing went; then, by degrees, taste, smell, touch, and the very power of motion. He could breathe, he could swallow, he could think, and, strange to say, he could speak; that was all. Not the very slightest message from without could possibly, it seemed, reach his mind; nothing to tell him what was near, who was still alive; the world was utterly lost to him, and he all but lost to the world. At last, one day, an accident showed that one small place on one cheek had its feeling left. It seemed a revelation from heaven. By tracing letters on that place his wife and children could speak to him; his dark dungeon-wall was pierced. His tongue

had never lost its power, and once more he was a man among men. Strange this, and true; a parable full of suggestion in our present study. The worst kind of paralysis that ever strikes any man or woman is that of the heart and conscience. There never was a man with no affections and no sense of right and wrong; but I doubt not I speak to some this evening who are conscious of a very remarkable change as to the sensitiveness of conscience as the years have gone on. You can recall deeds that are contrary to God's will as plainly expressed in the Bible that once you could not have permitted without the keenest rebuke from your conscience; but now you break the law of God at that point with almost complete indifference. Gradually you are silencing the voice of God in your breast. If you had obeyed your conscience from the first it would have remained keenly alive, and would have been a perfect monitor to have kept you from the dangers of sin; but because you have disregarded it a creeping paralysis is crawling upon you.

I am sure that some of you will recall occasions when you were very keenly alert and sensitive to the duty of becoming a Christian. You were drawn with a strange power toward the open confession and service of Jesus Christ. But some secret sin, some love of the world, something, held

you back and, though knowing your duty, you did not do it, and never since then have those spiritual impressions been so clear as at that time. My friends, all this does not mean that God's word has changed. Sin is still sin, and the wages of sin is death, just as it used to be. But you have grieved the Spirit of God until a deadly paralysis of the spiritual perception, of the conscience, and of the will is creeping over the powers of your soul. I pray God that the Holy Spirit may find the one sensitive point that is left yet, and may communicate from heaven with your heart to-night!

It is never sin, but a lack of willingness to forsake sin and accept the forgiveness and good cheer which Jesus brings, that keeps the sinner from Christ. Christ is able to save the chief of sinners, and whenever the heart will respond to him any sinner may be forgiven.

A Sunday school teacher in a large city had a class of girls. One of them was a singularly interesting girl, only sixteen years of age, the only daughter of a widowed mother. One Sunday she was missing from her class. Upon inquiry at home he found that Mary had been lured from her mother's house by some wretch who had taken her away, and no trace remained whereby they could ascertain where she was. The Sunday school teacher used every exertion to discover her, but in

vain. At last, after several months, he received intelligence that the poor girl had been abandoned by her deceiver, and that she was slowly dying in a miserable garret. He went to her mother, and asked if she had anything belonging to Mary in her possession. The mother drew herself up and, with a frown, charged him never to mention Mary's name again in her presence. Still he persevered, and at last she went to a press, took out a little Bible, and said, "There's her Bible—take it; let me never hear her name mentioned again." He took up the little Bible—many a passage was marked in it—and went out.

After a couple of hours he found himself ascending the stairs which led to a squalid garret. There, crouched over the embers of a half-consumed fire, he saw the poor girl of whom he was in search. She turned around at the noise of the opening door. A bright hectic flush was on either cheek. There was a hollow cough and a startled cry of shame and terror.

He went forward. "Mary," he said, "do you know this book?"

"O!" she screamed, "my Sunday school Bible!" She buried her pale, thin, emaciated face in her worn hands and wept violently.

"Put on your shawl," he said, "and come along with me."

She obeyed as though walking in a dream, followed him down the stairs into a cab, and they drove back to her mother's cottage. Mary said nothing, but lay back in the corner as though she had fainted. At last she started. "Where are you taking me?" she cried.

They stopped before the mother's door. The teacher took the half-fainting girl in his arms and bore her inside. The mother was standing before the grate as though changed to stone. The poor, wretched girl tottered feebly forward and fell upon her knees.

"O mother, can you forgive me?"

A wild, fierce gleam shot from her mother's eyes, but it was followed by a holy, sweet, compassionate, yearning look of love. She rushed forward, and the next moment poor Mary was clasped in her mother's arms. The faithful teacher turned away without a word.

A few days later a letter reached him. It was blotted over with frequent tears. It said: "Mary is dead; but ere she died she whispered to me, 'Mother, tell him, my Sunday school teacher, who, under God, has saved my soul, tell him whom the Good Shepherd sent after me to find me, that my last dying words were, 'I, the poor lost one, washed in my precious Saviour's blood from all my sins, and robed in his everlasting robe of righteousness—that I,

poor castaway, through his wondrous love, with dying breath cry,

Salvation! O the joyful sound!

What pleasure to my ears!

A sovereign balm for every wound,

A cordial for my fears.” ” ”

The Christ that brought good cheer to the poor man that was smitten with paralysis so that he had to be carried to Christ by his friends, and the Christ who saved that poor girl in the hour of her despair, is able to save you. He will bring good cheer to your heart and to your life if you will receive him to-night.

Many whose lives have been so hedged about by the church and by the influences of a Christian civilization that they have never fallen into shameful sin are in just as great danger of being lost at last through their failure to avail themselves by direct and personal obedience of the salvation purchased by the dying love of Jesus. It is strange how the children of Christian parents and the associates of Christian people, men and women who have had the truth pressed home upon their heart again and again, will sometimes so close their hearts against it that their indifference becomes a dangerous and deadly paralysis. If only that indifference could be shaken for a moment, so that you could see your

great need of Christ and of the salvation which he offers, I am sure you would come to him to-night.

Frank Wraithe was a very fine organist. His father had been a devout Christian and had gone home to heaven. But Frank, though he played in the church, and enjoyed specially the music of the church, had grown utterly indifferent to the question of his personal salvation. There was in the church a man known as Bobby Turner. He was a quaint old man, odd and peculiar, but everybody loved him, he was so genuinely pervaded with the Spirit of Christ. One day the organist came into the organ gallery late in the evening, when it was dark, for a piece of music he had forgotten, and while there he became conscious that some one else was in the church below him. Bobby Turner was praying. He was talking to God as though he were sitting close at hand. In a moment Frank Wraithe was trembling, for he recognized that the old man was telling the Lord about him.

“And now, my Father,” the old man was saying, “there’s that other matter I mentioned to thee this morning. I was telling thee about Mister Frank, and begging thee to get him saved. Thou hast his father up there beside thee, and he’ll have told thee about the lad. I fear my friend John will not have realized all that he hoped he would. Him and me used to sing together:

‘And when I lose this stammering tongue
I’ll sing as loud as they.’

He’ll have lost the stammering tongue, but he’ll stammer when he thinks of Mister Frank. He’s a grand lad is Mister Frank, my Father, and a bonny good musician, and a rare good lad to his mother. He just wants the needful, the one thing, the change of heart, the life that Jesus gives. I thought thee would have done it before now, but thou’ll have some good reason for biding a while. My Father, have a word with Mister Frank, and get things settled, and then the music here will be bad to beat, and my friend John will be able to sing without stammer.”

Frank Wraithe was soon on his knees in the dark and silent gallery. The simple prayer of his father’s friend had opened the flood gates of his memory. His father’s face was near him, the voice of the dead was speaking, the prayers of the past were repeated. His spirit’s deeps were troubled. He had known the holiest influences and been the object of the dearest solicitude. The best within him was in the ascendant. Thronging his mind were the past reminiscences. He was bathed in tears and praying—praying that his sins might be forgiven, and for the sense of peace. The good cheer of Christ came into his heart, and he went down out of that dark gallery with a soul full of light.

Frank Wraithe went to the class meeting on

Tuesday night. He had never been there before. Bobby Turner looked at him sharply when he entered. The old man knew not what to think. "What's thou want here, Mister Frank?" he asked, suspicion in every tone.

"Do you not want new members?" Frank replied.

"The Lord be praised! Signs and wonders! My friend John will know, and what a time they'll have in heaven. Now he'll be singing in style! The Lord be praised!" And Bobby Turner was gripping the organist's hand and shaking it vigorously. And we are sure there was joy in heaven, for has not Jesus said that there is joy there over one sinner that repenteth?

Will you not add to that heavenly joy to-night by obeying the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting all the good cheer with which he waits to gladden your soul?

VIII

THE GREATEST QUESTION OF EXCHANGE

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—*Mark* viii, 36, 37.

I SHALL never talk on a more important theme, and you will never have offered to you for consideration a subject which has more in it to demand the full measure of your power to weigh values and decide wisely, than the one brought to you in this text to-night. However it may seem to you now, the hour is coming, swift-winged, on the pinions of passing time, when, no matter what else you have gained or lost, neither gain nor loss will be of any account unless you have made sure of the salvation of your soul.

When the great Gladstone was dying, and the young and brilliant and rich and world-famous Lord Rosebery came to bid him good-bye, Gladstone said, "Rosebery, look out for your soul," and the Grand Old Man died, having looked out for his soul.

When Sir Walter Scott had reached the same trying hour he drew Lockhart down to him and kissed him, and cried, tearfully, as he said: "Be

good, my dear, be good. Nothing else counts when you come to lie here." Sir Walter Scott had known much of gaining the world and of losing it, and had learned the great lesson that all other gain and loss is insignificant compared to the gain of the soul.

How in contrast to these two cases stands Lord Byron! He was determined to gain the world, to win fame and glory. He won it, but he lost his soul, and in losing it lost even in this world all that makes life of value. The poet describes his case with graphic sadness :

"Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame; drank early, deeply drank; drank draughts
Which common millions might have drank. Then died
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink."

I think that many people in reading this Scripture which we are studying, or in listening to a discussion about it, make the great mistake of imagining that it is interesting only to people of large wealth or great genius who are tempted to strive for the vast prizes of fortune. Nothing can be farther from the truth than this. The fact is that the spirit, the motive, which masters men and women and makes them good or bad is exactly the same in the poor as in the rich. It is possible for one whose salary is very small, and who has but little money to handle, to live and die a miser, and it

is possible for one who deals with millions to live and die in the spirit of a beggar.

[A most interesting and suggestive story is told of Baron Rothschild, of Paris, and his close friend Duran, the artist. During the entire course of a certain large dinner party the great financier noted that the painter kept looking at him with a most intent and peculiar expression. After the coffee the Baron drew his friend aside and said, "My dear fellow, pray tell me why you have stared at me so peculiarly this evening?"

"I'll tell you with pleasure," answered Duran. "I am painting a beggar for the Salon, and have looked all over Paris for a suitable head to draw from. I have finally found it. Yours is the ideal."

Rothschild laughed heartily, and promised to sit for his friend in suitable attire on the following day.

During the progress of the sitting a young artist, one of Duran's pupils, came into the room. Naturally he had not been in a position to meet people of Baron Rothschild's importance, and so did not know him; but the beggar's miserable rags, wan face, and wistful expression appealed deeply to the young man's sympathies. Waiting until his master was busy mixing colors, the poor young artist took a franc from his vest pocket and held it out behind

his back to the model, who seized it with feigned avidity.

The man of millions lived, as had his fathers before him, with such an insatiable spirit of greed that the lust for money had chiseled his face into a perfect type of the common beggar of the street. He was the incarnation of greed for money. And so it is possible for one to live in very humble surroundings as well as in very high ones and yet have this problem of the exchange of the soul for the fleeting values of this world as a question which he must settle.

It is often a question which settles itself by degrees without seriously alarming the man or the woman who is, in fact, exchanging immortal values for the things of the world. How often is it true that one who has been brought up to the Christian life, and to whom the reading of the Bible, the daily prayer, and the attendance at church have been as natural as the air he breathed, has been drawn away from it all, not suddenly, but gradually, as the world with its temptations and its allurements has come in upon him like a flood, until finally Christ and prayer and heaven are blotted out and the world has possession. 1

One day a gentleman was riding on a Western prairie and lost his way. Clouds arose in the sky, and not seeing the sun he quite lost his reckoning.

Night came on, and as he knew not which way to guide his horse he let him take his own way. By and by a light glimmered in the distance, and it was not long before the horse stopped before a log cabin.

"Who's there?" somebody shouted from within.

"A benighted traveler. Can you give me a night's lodging?"

"You're welcome," said the man, appearing at the door.

The traveler was thankful enough to give up his saddle and bridle to the master of the log cabin. He found the family at supper, and a place was soon made for the stranger.

Some time in the evening the settler asked, "Are you a minister of the Gospel, sir?"

"No," he answered; and seeing the man looked disappointed he asked why he wished to know.

"O sir," answered the man. "I hoped a minister had come to help me build a family altar. I had one once, but I lost it coming over the Alleghanies. It is a great loss."

"Perhaps I can help you to build one, though I am not a minister," said the gentleman, who always had one himself; and after a little more talk the man handed him an old family Bible. He read, and they all knelt for prayer. The gentleman prayed, and then called upon the settler, who,

greatly moved at this new consecration of his humble home to God, poured out his soul in penitence and promises of a better life.

When they rose from their knees the master of the log cabin said, "Sir, there is many an immigrant who loses his family altar before he gets here—and it's a great loss."

But there are a great many more besides immigrants that lose their family altars. They are lost in shops and stores and in politics and in a hundred vicissitudes of daily life, and it is an irreparable loss, for many a man loses his soul through the loss of his secret prayer and his prayer in the family.

If we are going to be true to our best selves our first choice and our real master must be the will of God. No man or woman can be truly good if the first question asked about any proposed conduct is, "What effect will it have on my fortune, or my popularity, or my success in a worldly way?" No, the great question must be, "What does God desire?"

Once when Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, was at Stockholm the king sent and requested her to sing at his palace one Sunday afternoon at some sort of court festival. She refused, whereupon the king himself called on her and commanded her presence. Still she refused. "There is a higher King, sir, to whom I owe my first allegiance," she

said. In deed and song she always honored the One who gave her her marvelous voice. The homage she received on both sides of the Atlantic, and wherever she went, was a literal fulfillment of the promise that "Them that honor me I will honor."

The question comes home to you to-night. There is only one way to save the soul, and that is through Jesus Christ who died on the cross to bring you to God. To reject Christ, to refuse him obedience, to count the blood of his covenant an unholy thing, to trample under your feet his offer of love, is to choose the world and shut the door of hope on your own soul.

And yet some of you are treating this question very lightly. You have laughed and said, "It is not a question I am interested in." Ah, my friend, that laugh may come ringing back in mocking echo to you some day when it will sound very differently.

A foolish young man, boasting of his infidelity, said, "I will sell to anyone all my interest in Christ for five dollars." An old man in the crowd produced five dollars, and took from his pocket a piece of paper on which he wrote, "I hereby, now and forever, sell all my interest in the divine mercy of Jesus Christ, and any hope which I may have of heaven."

"Write your name here," said the old man, "and the money is yours."

The young man took the pen and held it for a few moments over the paper; hesitated, and, turning away, said, emphatically, "I was mistaken; I cannot afford to do it.")

The thought uppermost in his mind at that time was, "What will become of my soul?" He did not dare to sign that paper and in so solemn a way imperil his salvation. But what folly that he should go on, letting all the opportunities and privileges of life slip by, while every day his soul was in peril. And are not you presuming on the mercy of God in the same way? God's call is now, not some time in the future. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart!" Don't risk your soul another day unsaved! Make sure of the salvation of your soul, and then nothing else will count very much. You may be poor or sick in this world, but if all eternity is made sure for happiness and peace, then your life will have been a tremendous success. But be you ever so rich, ever so successful, ever so famous in this world, if you lose your soul, and all eternity is given over to sorrow and remorse, then your life has been a stupendous failure. Let's make sure of the best things, and of the greatest value. Let me close as I began: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

IX

THE YOKE THAT BRINGS REST

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—*Matthew xi, 28-30.*

JESUS CHRIST is the only personality in the history of mankind who could ever have made a statement like that and have been taken seriously. Think of any other man uttering words of that character! Think over the great men of history—Charlemagne, Frederick the Great, Martin Luther, Napoleon, Washington. What folly such words would be on their lips! There never has lived a conqueror or a ruler or a philosopher who dared to open his arms to the tired and weary millions of earth and promise that if they would come to him he would give them rest.

Dr. Barnardo, who has done so much for the stray waifs of London, tells us how the work was laid upon his conscience. First he ran across one little barefooted, ragged, starving boy, and when something in the conversation led him to inquire if there were any more like him who had no place to sleep, the boy led him along with him, and they climbed out on the roof of a wretched building, and

there the little ragged, half-starved fellows were, lying around on the sooty roof without any pretense of a bed or comfort of any kind. The little fellow who had led him there was alert to get any benefits he might for his companions, and so he looked inquiringly into Dr. Barnardo's face and asked, "Shall I wake 'em?" "No, no," said the puzzled doctor, who did not know what he was going to do with the one he had. But Jesus Christ is not afraid for you to go forth and awaken all the sad and weary and broken-hearted millions of earth. You may go to all the men and women who have been broken and crushed by sin, and he will not stay you, nay, he will urge you on to awaken every one of them to a keen sense of their need, for he is able to bestow forgiveness and rest on every one.

Christ is the only one who can take a life that has been seared and blighted by sin until it has lost its hope and courage and fertility, and cause it to send forth again new buds of hope and promise. I could tell you from my own personal experience in winning men and women to Christ of many who were so discouraged and disheartened with their own failures that life had lost all its beauty and there was no longer any desire to live. I have seen again and again a man or a woman like that on the very verge of suicide, but when I have been able to make

him or her believe that Jesus Christ meant all that the words suggest when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," a new hope was born in the heart, and those same people are now hopeful and cheerful and are meeting all the struggle of life with courage. They have found that Christ told the truth when he declared, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

A traveler tells that some years ago, after an ascent of Vesuvius, the suggestion was made by a reckless member of the party that they make a dash across the crater. It so happened that at that time the mouth of the volcano was bridged by irregular masses of scoria that had fallen back upon each other, forming a broken cap through which the sulphurous smoke rose in stifling clouds. Wrapping heavy shawls about their faces, so as to exclude the suffocating gases, they were soon toiling amid the ragged rocks that almost blistered their feet, keeping within touch of each other in order to render any needed aid. It was a terrible experience, and they were all glad to escape alive, and no one thought of going back. They started down the mountain very soberly and thoughtfully, but were astonished in the descent, when just below the lofty cone where the smoke and flames were being belched forth, to find a violet beside the road,

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growing up out of the rotting and decaying lava, and a little below, wide-stretching natural gardens of them, like a brodered carpet, met them on either hand. The chemistry of God's nature had taken that scalding lava, so full of death, and by the agency of his sunshine and his breath from the sea had changed it into the soil that produced these violets and a little farther down produced smiling vineyards.

So, my friend, however sin may have hurt you and marred you, however your plans may have been thwarted and your heart broken with trouble, Jesus Christ is inviting you to come to him to-night and find rest unto your soul. You remember those wonderful words of Paul, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And that shall be realized in your case if you will come to Christ with all your heart. The joys and hopes and ambitions which you have known and lost have been poor indeed to the joys and hopes and ambitions and achievements which you shall know if you go forth from this night in love and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Some of you are suffering from the burdens of sinful desire and evil habit. Perhaps the one thought that makes you pause most doubtfully about becoming a Christian is the fear that you could not be faithful to your vow. Put that aside

entirely. It is not your part of the program to keep yourself from sinful desire when you have given your heart to Christ. It is only your part to obey Christ and to keep yourself in the love of God. So long as you trust Christ, and sun yourself in his confidence, Christ will keep you. He will give you a new heart, full of the new desire and the new purpose of righteousness. He will take out of your breast the old heart, with its hates and its jealousies and all its evil and impure feelings.

A striking testimony to the perfection of Christ's power to do this was borne by a little negro servant who waited on the faithful missionary, Moffat. He was just a little bit of a black piece of humanity that had been picked up out of heathenism, with all the hate and viciousness of his heathen life pervading him and clinging to him; but with the simplicity of a child he had given his heart to Christ, and Jesus transformed his whole nature, and gave him perfect rest from the power and dominion of sin. One day he came to Moffat in great distress because the watchdog had eaten some leaves of his Testament, and he was weeping over it. Moffat told him it was not so serious a matter as he thought; he could get him another Testament.

"O, it is not that, massa; there is more!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Well, before I knew anything about that book,

when I hated some one I wanted to kill him; but when I got that book into my heart, when a person did me wrong, I loved him and prayed for him. I am afraid that now the dog has eaten some of that book he will love his enemies and let the flock be eaten up!"

Of course it was all wonderfully simple. The little fellow did not see the difference between the physical eating and the spiritual. But what a clear and marvelous illustration of the power of Jesus Christ to free an ignorant and sinful soul from the tyranny of hate and anger and from all the evil powers that had been preying upon it. Christ can work that transformation in you. There is not an evil habit, there is not a wicked passion that has caused you sorrow and sin, but, if you will surrender your heart to Christ, he will give you freedom from it, and you shall find rest unto your soul.

But you say, "There is a yoke mentioned in the text, and a yoke means work." Yes, but a yoke, a harness in which you may work well and perform your true purpose in the world, is essential to all true living. You surely do not imagine that idle people are the happiest people. If so, you have made a very great blunder. Of all the people in the world, whether rich or poor, high or low, the people who are idle, who do not do any good work in the world; who are animated by no

great purpose to help their fellow-men; who make no effort to do their part in the world's work; who have none of the joy of working together with God to make the world a better place in which to live; who have no hand in that divine struggle to cure the heartaches of their fellow-men—of all people these are the most miserable.

The ideally happy situation is to have work which one may approach and carry with such a spirit and in such companionship that one may sing as he works. And that is exactly what Christ offers. First, he will free you from all the yokes of the world. No yoke of sin shall gall your shoulders. No burden of iniquity shall press upon your back. From all these Christ will set you free and give you rest. Then he will show you the work you ought to do. He will give you the strength to do it. It will be a yoke, but his own neck will be in the other end of it. It is his yoke. I was reared in the land of oxen, on the frontier in the forests, but I never saw a yoke—and I have seen thousands of them—that was not made for two. They do not work oxen alone. They work in pairs. Christ works in the other half of our yoke. We shall pull no load where we shall not have his fellowship. The yoke will be easy in such company. Love makes labor light. Christ will ask you to carry no burden that it will not be an honor to carry. I

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assure you it is as great a privilege, it is as great a joy, to get to wear Christ's yoke and bear Christ's burden as it is to get free from the cruel yokes of the world and of sin.

Christ will give to your soul rest from the fear of death. Death is the king of terrors to all who are not Christians. But if you will give your heart completely to Christ he will take away that terror. We have had a great illustration during the past year of the power of Christ to do that. Perhaps during his entire life President McKinley had no opportunity to be such an effective witness for Jesus Christ, his Saviour and his Lord, as when he came to die. Mr. James Creelman, in his book *On the Great Highway*, gives an authorized version of his last words. It is one of the most marvelous illustrations in history of the power of Jesus Christ to give perfect rest to the soul in its greatest emergency. In the afternoon of his last day on earth the President began to realize that his life was slipping away and that the efforts of science could not save him. He asked his family physician to bring the surgeons in. One by one the surgeons entered and approached the bedside. When they were gathered about him the President opened his eyes and said:

"It is useless, gentlemen; I think we ought to have prayer."

The dying man crossed his hands on his breast

and half closed his eyes. There was a beautiful smile on his countenance. The surgeons bowed their heads. Tears streamed from the eyes of the white-clad nurses on either side of the bed.

“Our Father which art in heaven,” said the President, in a clear, steady voice.

The lips of the surgeons moved.

“Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done—”

The sobbing of a nurse disturbed the still air. the President opened his eyes and closed them again.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

A long sigh. The sands of life were running swiftly.

“Give us this day our daily bread ; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Another silence. The surgeons looked at the dying face and the trembling lips.

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”

“Amen,” whispered the surgeons.

A little later the President was conscious again. He asked for his wife. Presently she came to him, leaning feebly on the arm of his secretary. As she reached the side of her husband and lover—who had read to her every day at twilight for years from the Bible—she sank into a chair and, leaning her

frail form over the white counterpane, she took his hands in hers and kissed them.

The President's eyes were closed. His breath came slowly. As he felt the touch of his wife's lips he smiled. It was to be their last meeting on earth.

"Good-bye! Good-bye, all."

Mrs. McKinley gazed into the white face and struggled for strength to bear it.

"It is God's way. His will, not ours, be done."

The President turned his face slightly toward his wife. A look of ineffable love shone in the haggard features. The ticking of the clock in the next room could be heard. Once more the President spoke:

"Nearer, my God, to thee—"

His soul was on his lips. His face was radiant.

"E'en though it be a cross—"

There was a moment of utter silence.

"That has been my inextinguishable prayer."

His voice was almost inaudible.

"It is God's way."

It was the last thought and the last word of the gentle President on earth. He awoke in heaven. He had rest.

What Christ did for President McKinley he will do for the humblest and the poorest man or woman in the world who trusts him and loves him. Christ is no respecter of persons. He has not one kind of

love and tenderness for a president and another for a stable-boy or a blacksmith. No, indeed. The Carpenter of Nazareth is the same loving Saviour, and is ready and able to give the same rest of soul to everyone that will come unto him.

X

THE GOD WITHIN REACH

They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.—*Matthew* i, 23.

CHRIST brought God within reach of human eyes and ears and hands. He came and lived with us. God's angels sang about him at his birth. God's star guided the wise men to his side. He was God manifest in the flesh. He was man, so that men and women and children were not afraid of him, and were drawn to him in tender human love; and yet he was God with divine power, so that he healed the lepers and opened the ears of the deaf and made the blind to see and healed all manner of diseases. He lived with us in all our ordinary trials and temptations. He tasted of loneliness and homesickness. He knew what it was to be poor and hungry and tired. He experienced that most bitter of all earthly sorrows, the ingratitude and betrayal of false friends. He was tempted in all points like as we are. He was perfected through suffering. He paid the price of suffering to become the perfect Captain of our salvation. He did not hold himself aloof from any poverty or suffering or shame which we have to bear, and yet he passed through

it all without sin. He was with us in God's strength and purity and love. He was a God within reach when he came to die. He suffered and sorrowed like other men. When Judas betrayed him he did it with a kiss of pretended friendship as he would have betrayed any other man. Christ stood before Pilate as a criminal. The soldiers crowned him with thorns and spit upon him and mocked him as they would the most common man. They stripped his shoulders and scourged him till the blood ran down over his body like any poor, suffering creature. They nailed his hands and his feet to the cross just as they did the two thieves that were crucified on either side of him. And yet it was a God that stood before Pilate, a God who suffered on that cross, and the majesty of divine love was in him. The majesty of divine power was in his words as he said to the dying thief who repented of his sins and begged forgiveness, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Christ's resurrection from the dead did not separate him from us and put him beyond our reach. His resurrection is the pledge that all who sleep in Jesus shall win a similar victory. He is a sample sheaf in the heavenly garner. He has not withdrawn from us. Stephen, the first man to die for his Lord, was permitted to look into heaven, and he saw Jesus there interceding for him, and with

perfect confidence he committed his spirit into the hands of his Saviour.

Christ is still a God within reach. He promised us before he went away that whatsoever we should ask of the Father in his name, with faith believing, should be granted to us, and he will keep that promise. Christ's is the Supreme Will in the universe, and if we keep in touch with him he will order our lives for us. Some things among the forces of nature in this world God has put into our hands, and they obey our will. Steam and the electric current obey our will, and do what we say, and we have only to go farther up, and appeal to the Supreme Will in Jesus Christ, through prayer, and all the strength and wisdom and love of God is given unto us to the limit of our necessity.

Dr. O. P. Gifford uses this clear and simple illustration: We stand on the corner of the street. To the right and to the left stretch the steel tracks and the trolley wires. On the corner stand six men and women and a little boy. Down the track comes a trolley car. The little boy steps out from the curb and lifts his finger. What does he expect? He expects that trolley car will stop for him. Science sneers. She has never seen anything of that sort. A boy stop a trolley car? Certainly. That trolley system was built for the boy's sake, and when there are no boys and girls and

men and women to stop trolley cars the system rusts back again, and the meaning of it all is found in the men and women and boys and girls who want to stop by the wayside. The boy lifts the silent finger, and the car stops. Has he broken any law? No. But he has stayed one of the most tremendous forces known to our new century, because it was organized and built around that boy. He steps into the car, and the car spins by. The other men and women there do not care for the car. They are not going that way. The conductor comes along to the boy and asks for a fare. The boy has no fare. The car is stopped, he steps out on the street to walk. Do you remember the Scripture which says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"? You want the light that comes with answered prayer without complying with the conditions. And the answer is, "Canceled," and you become a weary footsore traveler again. But suppose the boy pays his fare. He rides on ten blocks. The car has filled. He raises his finger, and the car stops. Nobody finds fault. It is part of its daily routine to stop when a human will lifts its silent finger.

So the entire universe of God was organized around man and there is not a force in all the stars in their courses, in all the tides from the ebbs and

floods, from center to circumference, in God's universe, not a force or a law, that is not under the divine will and cannot be used for the furtherance of human interests. And when through Jesus Christ our Saviour we take hold upon God in prayer, we have reached the source of all power.

I want to urge this message home upon you because the one great source of power for us in winning souls in these special days of consecration to that one object is in God. I feel that there is not prayer enough among us. We cannot do this work in our own strength. We are by no means equal to the task. But if we will all take hold upon God, if we will besiege the throne of heavenly grace, nothing can stand against us, and multitudes will be saved.

The whole story of human history is illuminated with incidents of God's direct answer to prayer. A poor woman once came to Mr. Spurgeon, accompanied by her neighbors. She was in very deep distress. Her husband had fled the country. In her sorrow she had gone to hear Mr. Spurgeon preach, and something he said in the sermon made her think he was personally familiar with her case. He had known nothing about her. He had used a general illustration that fitted a particular case. She told him her story, and a very sad one it was. Mr. Spurgeon said, "There is nothing we can do but

to kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband." They knelt down, and Mr. Spurgeon led in the prayer that the Lord would touch the heart of the deserter, convert his soul, and bring him back to his home. When they arose from their knees he said to the poor woman: "Do not fret about the matter. I feel sure that your husband will come home, and that he will yet become connected with our church." Some months afterward she reappeared, with her neighbors and a man whom she introduced to Mr. Spurgeon as her husband. He had indeed come back, and he had returned a converted man. On making inquiry and comparing notes they found that the very day on which they had prayed for his conversion he, being at that time on board a ship far away on the sea, stumbled most unexpectedly upon a stray copy of one of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons. He read it. The truth went to his heart. He repented and sought the Lord, and as soon as possible he returned to his wife, and they both became earnest and helpful members of Mr. Spurgeon's church. The preacher and the wife and her friends had taken hold upon God through Jesus Christ, and he had touched that man's heart and brought him back.

A minister in a small town in the interior of New York was preaching on the subject of prayer, and

laid special emphasis on mothers' prayers. At the close of the sermon, when an invitation was given for any to rise who would like to accept Christ, a young man arose, back at the door, and cried out in terror and anguish: "Some one of you pray for me. My mother's prayers are bothering me." The young man had gone three times that morning past that church door, but had been drawn back by some influence he could not account for, and finally had to go in. It turned out that on that very evening, in Rochester, sixty-eight miles away, the young man's mother had been on her knees in a mothers' meeting, with a burden of soul crying to God for her son. She could not reach her son directly, but she reached God, and God reached her son's heart with his Spirit.

A young man here in New York city was deeply concerned for the salvation of his father, who lived in Massachusetts. One day in the Fulton Street prayer meeting his concern for his father's conversion became so pungent that he went from the prayer meeting and took the Fall River steamer for home. He took a stateroom and spent nearly all that night wrestling with God, as Jacob did, praying for his father. On reaching home the next evening he took down the Bible and said, "Father, let us read a chapter in the Bible and pray." "Certainly," said the father; "you read." After the

reading, to the boy's great astonishment and joy, his father led in prayer, pouring forth the most earnest petitions.

"Father," said the son, as they rose from their knees, "how long is it since God gave you a heart to pray?"

"I first began last night," replied the father. "I was awakened in the night, and cried to God for mercy, and he has had mercy upon me."

But let me give you an incident nearer home. On the seventeenth of December I received a letter signed by a mother and her daughter telling me of their great interest in a son and brother who had been very indifferent to Christ and the church. They were afraid for me to speak to him for fear I would drive him away entirely, but begged that I would join with them in prayer for his salvation. It was a most earnest letter, and as I read it it thrilled me with the deep love and longing and faith in God that had prompted it. Most earnestly I prayed, as I am sure that mother and sister prayed, for the salvation of that man and his wife. What was the result? On Christmas night, only eight days after the letter was received, and before the revival meetings had begun, that son and brother, with his wife, asked for prayer in the prayer meeting, and gave their hearts to Christ. And the first night of the revival meetings that young man stood

up beside his mother to bear his happy testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to save.

My friends, as you gather about the communion altar do not put Christ afar off, but draw near to him in faith, and know that he is a God within reach.

XI

THE CAST OF THE NET

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.—*John* xxi, 6.

THIS little fishing story is full of suggestion. These friends had been fishing all night, until they were utterly worn out, and had caught nothing. Their hearts had been sore and aching before, and their minds were perplexed and troubled. It had been to get rid of their harassing thoughts and to still their aching hearts that Simon Peter had led them off on this fishing trip, and now not only do their thoughts trouble them and their hearts ache, but they are worn out in body as well. But just then they saw Jesus on the side of the lake with a little fire built on the shore. They did not yet know it was the Lord. Suddenly he called to them. They listened, and they heard him say, "Children, have ye any meat?" And they answered him, "No." And again came back the shouted words, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

They did as they were bid, no doubt full of wonder; but when the net was full of fishes, so

many that they could not pull them in, John turned and whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord," and Peter jumped overboard and swam ashore to see Jesus.

The disciples always caught fish when Jesus was along, and he often used the net and the fisherman's calling to illustrate the greater mission of winning souls and capturing them for him. He promised those who were fishermen among his disciples that if they would follow him he would make them "fishers of men," and he will do that with any man or woman who will follow him in humility and obedience.

Now, we are trying in this church to cast the net among the people about us, so that we may capture immortal souls for our divine Lord, save them from their sins here, and bring them to everlasting glory in heaven. If we are going to do this we must bring them to Jesus. During Christ's own ministry men were healed and saved when they came into touch with him, and if we are going to save men now we must bring them into contact with our divine Lord. Kate McNeill, an English singer, gives us a simple but very beautiful little poem which clearly brings out this mighty truth:

"How long, O Jesus, shall we keep
Our palsied from thy power away!
When shall our lame take freedom's leap,
Our darkened see thy day?

"Have we been healed to stand so calm,
In all our dignity and doubt,
Between the bruised and the balm,
And never bring them out?

"We dry no tear, no sickness cure—
Pull no infernal fortress down;
We bring no bounty to the poor,
No gem to Jesus' crown.

"Thy Gospel tells of those who brought
Their helpless, hopeless ones to thee;
O, by those early Christians taught,
May we 'believe to see.'

"They said, 'Enough of vigils vain!
We'll call a halt to dead routine!
Our poor demoniac shall be sane,
Our leper shall be clean,

"'Our cripple shall not need his crutch,
Our dumb shall sing, our deaf shall hear,
For Christ can heal them by a touch,
And we will bring them near.'

"Lord, give us back the passion flame
That burned in thy disciples then,
For glory to thy precious name,
And life to dying men!

"Until the scoffer be compelled
The bare right arm of God to see,
And slaves, in nameless bondage held,
Go forth forever free.

"Our lapsed have baffled all our skill,
No mortal aid the need can meet;
O Jesus Christ! All-powerful still!
We bring them to thy feet."

When Jesus was here on earth in human form, as well as now, men and women were usually won personally. The glory of a revival of religion is that it arouses a large number of people to go out personally with the hand net, and talk with men and women about Jesus, and bring them into contact with him; and then, as these people come to the church and listen to the word, the preacher is able to cast the larger net in obedience to the Master's command. No work we can do is so great and glorious as this.

The late President Harrison was a profound student of the Bible. He was, too, an earnest member of the Presbyterian Church and an active Sunday school worker. Among the attendants at his Sunday school was a young man who was employed as a clerk in an Indianapolis store. This was in 1881, during the session of the Legislature in which General Harrison was a candidate for the United States Senate. On account of the uncertain complexion of the Senate at that time, the Indiana contest was one of national interest; the days and nights were occupied with planning and campaigning, and every moment of General Harrison's time was demanded by his supporters. Inquiries for him were constant. He left one conference only to be drawn into another.

One Sunday, at the conclusion of the regular

service, a member of Mr. Harrison's church approached the young clerk and invited him to join the church membership. The young man replied that he could not formally affiliate himself with any church because, though he believed the Scriptures in a general way, he was still perplexed on a number of points. In that condition of mind he could not conscientiously join a church. This conversation was overheard by General Harrison.

The general quietly ascertained where the young man lived, and on the next evening called at his boarding house. The landlady, who recognized him, was surprised and awed, and replied to an inquiry if the young man were at home that he was. She invited the general into the parlor, but he said that he would rather meet the young man in his own room.

He was conducted to a small rear room on the upper floor, and when the young man opened the door in answer to the landlady's knock and saw General Harrison he said, as he was wont afterward to express it, that he might have been knocked down by a feather. Though he had long admired Mr. Harrison at a distance and had become accustomed to seeing him at church, he had never spoken to him, and had not imagined that the general was even aware of his existence.

Mr. Harrison sat down, and with an unwontedly

cordial manner at once set the young man at his ease. He told him that he had overheard his expression of doubts regarding the Scriptures, and said: "Now, I am a much older man than you. I have for years been a student of the Bible, and perhaps I may be able to throw some light upon the points which you do not understand. I hope, too, that you will not look upon my visit as an intrusion."

Having inquired as to what points were doubtful, General Harrison proceeded to invest them with a clear and definite meaning, and then entered upon an elaborate and masterful exposition of the basic truths of the Scriptures. At length the talk drew to a close, and Mr. Harrison looked at his watch. "Why, how late it is!" he said.

It was two o'clock in the morning, and he had talked with the young man for seven hours.

Thus, at a time when his political future was in the balance, and when political workers were constantly looking for him, he spent hours in sowing the spiritual seed in a field accidentally pointed out. But he won the young man to an immediate decision for Christ.

No doubt there might be a hundred influential men and women brought to Christ within the next ten days by the members of this church if only we could be made to see with clear eyes our duty and be anointed of the Holy Spirit for this service.

Many men and women who are successful and well-to-do in business and social affairs have lonely hearts, and consciences which are ill at ease, and hours when they are filled with inexpressible longing for the peace of God. O, if we could only each one of us use our hand net in Christ's dear name to catch such souls for him!

Dr. George F. Pentecost says he once ventured to speak to a very great man on religious matters, and ask him if he were a Christian; but he did so with some trepidation, not knowing how the man would receive it. At the close of the talk that ensued the doctor expressed the hope that the man had not considered him impertinent. The answer was a warm grasp of the hand, as the distinguished man said: "Don't ever hesitate to speak to any man about his soul. I have been longing for twenty years to have some Christian speak to me." And he continued: "I believe there are thousands of men in this city who are in the same condition that I am, carrying an uneasy conscience and a great burden on their souls; not courageous enough to seek instruction, yet willing to receive it.

But if that is true of those who are supported and bulwarked about in many ways to their comfort, how much more is it true of those who are in adversity, who are weighed down by misfortune and sorrow!

Last summer a man came to this church in great discouragement and despair. He had been in the hospital, and came out of it weak and depressed, with unpresentable clothing, and no money. He came and saw Mrs. Low, our parish visitor. That white-haired saint had a conversation with him. He said, "You do not give money, I know that; but if I could only be cleaned up a little, so that I could make a decent showing, I think I could get something to do." She went into her supply closet and found some clothes. Then she took him to a barber and arranged that he should have a bath and be shaved. When he came out, respectably clothed and with a clean face, she took him to a restaurant and gave him his dinner. During all her conversation with him you may well believe she had let no opportunity slip to put in an occasional word about her Lord. With all her motherly tenderness she told him about Jesus. He could not be vexed with her; she was too kind to him for that; and he could not doubt her, because he saw Jesus in her eyes and face.

After he had had his meal he thanked her and went down town to get work. Two or three days later he came up on purpose to tell her that he had gotten work temporarily, and was getting along all right. Again she pointed him to Christ, and he went away. She heard nothing more from him

till last Christmas, and then there came from him, from a town in the West, a handsome present to the white-haired Christian woman who had been so good to him last summer, and with it a beautiful letter in which he told how he had found steady employment and was now comfortably situated. But better than all, he was happy to tell her that he had found Christ as a personal Saviour, and that he was living a happy and, he hoped, a useful Christian life. He assured her that he owed his salvation to her kindness to him and the faithful words she had spoken to him about Christ.

My dear friends, the opportunities of casting a net for Jesus are all around us when we are ready to work in harmony with our Lord. Christ expects us to help him in the salvation of the souls for whom we are praying. We must help to answer our own prayers.

During a certain revival a man became very earnest in his desire for the conversion of one of his neighbors. He prayed for him again and again. There was one expression which he often repeated. It was this: "O Lord, touch that man with thy finger; touch him with thy finger, Lord!"

The petition was repeated with great earnestness, when something said to him: "Thou art the finger of God! Hast thou ever touched this thy neighbor? Hast thou ever spoken a single word to him on the

question of salvation? Go thou, and touch that man, and thy prayer shall be answered."

It was a voice from the very throne of God. The man arose from his knees, self-condemned. He had known his neighbor as a man without God and without hope in Christ for a quarter of a century, yet had uttered not a word of warning. Hundreds of opportunities had come and gone, but the supreme question of life had been set aside for such topics as the weather, the latest news, politics, and business. His first and supreme duty as a Christian had been left undone.

God help me to press this home upon your heart. Are you doing your duty as a personal friend of Jesus Christ toward the people whom you know and whom you meet in business and social relations? God help you that you may not forget to cast the net that shall save them for heaven!

XII

THE HOUSE-CLEANING OF THE SOUL

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out ; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first.—*Matthew xii, 43-45.*

THE message of this text is very clear. It is this: Reformation is an empty thing, only tempting every vagrant spirit of sin, unless the heart is garrisoned by the divine Presence and given to positive, earnest deeds of righteousness. As the new year has opened many of you have promised yourselves that your life shall be truer and cleaner and braver than in the year that has passed. You have swept it clean in your purpose, and have garnished it with new resolutions ; but all this will end in miserable failure unless you open your heart to God and invite Jesus Christ to come and dwell as the dominating guest in your soul.

I want to impress upon you that it is a great deal easier to do entirely right, to live a thoroughly consecrated Christian life, than to live a life just moderately good. I have heard a great many promises by people that they intended to do better,

and I frankly confess to you I have never known anyone yet to keep that kind of a promise. The fact is, it is not good enough to be kept. There is not enough in it to stir the soul of a man and make him do his best. But I have known thousands to be transformed under the decision, "God helping me, I will be a Christian!" When you are ready to go the whole length of the journey between sin and the mercy seat; when you are willing to go the whole journey from the world to Christ, and fill your life with a positive purpose to not only do better, but to do right, your life is transformed and lifted up into a new realm.

It is a very common thing to see a man who has been caught in the awful meshes of strong drink determine to break off that habit. I have written hundreds of pledges in the course of my life, for as many different men, who have come to me one at a time, through the years, and told me stories that would break any man's heart. I have written out a pledge and seen a man sign it and, lifting his hand over his head, with the tears running down his cheeks, say through his clinched teeth, "I call God to witness that I will die before I break that pledge!" And I have seen that very man drunk inside of two weeks. Do you think the man didn't mean it? Then you do not know men. He did mean it as truly and genuinely as ever any man

meant anything on earth. Why did he give way? He gave way because that empty house got its seven devils again. There was no tenant there. He had put nothing in its place.

I have had so much experience of this sort, and have sought to reform so many men and women from strong drink simply through their own resolution or the care and attention of their friends, that I have ceased to give a man any encouragement or to encourage any expectation to hope that he can break away from the habit of drunkenness unless he is willing not only to break with the one sin, but to break with all sin by giving his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man will do that, then there is no length I will not go in my sympathy, in my self-denying service, to save a man from the devil of strong drink. For I know that that can be done. There has not been a year in all the thirty years since, a boy of sixteen, I began to preach the Gospel, that I have not known of some, and in some years scores, who were utterly hopeless and despairing through their bondage to strong drink, but were ransomed and redeemed by opening their hearts to Jesus Christ and accepting him as a divine Saviour.

Jessie MacGregor saw in the paper a pitiful letter entitled "Confessions of a Human Wreck." It so stirred her heart that, taking the words of

Christ, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely," she wrote a beautiful poem entitled "The Love that Conquers Wine:"

"O God, when the awful, treacherous thirst
Assails this breast of mine,
Stand by me, Lord, and pour for me
The love that conquers wine!
'Thy love is better than wine!'
I grasp at the hope divine,
I stretch my hands for the blessed boon
That conquers love of wine.

"O, helpless, horrified, benumbed,
I slip o'er the steep incline!
The soul of the drunkard asks to grasp
The love that conquers wine.
'Thy love is better than wine,'
I want that love for mine;
I want a love that is greater far
Than thirst for mad'ning wine!

"I come to thee! Thou dost call the lost;
That calls for this soul of mine.
Thou art stronger, Lord, than sin and woe—
O Jesus, make me thine.
'Thy love is better than wine!'
Let me my thirst resign.
I stretch my hands to take the love
That conquers mad'ning wine.

"No longer death, but life, sweet life;
I taste of the drink divine.
Thy dripping hands have brought me life
And the love that conquers wine.

‘Thy love is better than wine!’
It conquers sin’s design.
The spell of the bitter cup no more
O’ercomes this soul of mine.

“I’ll keep on drinking, always drink
Of the fountain meant for me;
At morning, noon, in blackest night
Of haunting tragedy.
Through every hour that’s mine
I take of the heavenly wine—
The soul of the drunkard washed of woe
To revel in grace divine.”

Dr. MacArthur was once called to visit a dying woman in a house in a part of a city which was resting under grave suspicion as to its moral character. He had no sooner entered the house than his suspicions were reassured. But here was a young woman evidently near death. She was conscious of great guilt, and was earnestly crying unto God for mercy. His duty was clear. He must point her to Christ as the only hope for lost men or women. Never did the Gospel seem more suitable to a poor sinner’s case than on this occasion. He read the Scriptures that seemed to offer hope to the poor girl, and she listened as though they came from the lips of Christ himself. There were a number of others in the room. At the side of the bed stood a woman in mature life who was at the head of this wicked house, and several young women who were, like the dying one, members of

the sinful household. There were also two young men, who were visitors at the place, and one of whom had a special interest in the dying woman. Dr. MacArthur said that the charm of the Master's words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," were witnessed as he had never before seen; and the other words of Jesus, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her;" and the words, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." And then he read that wonderful story of the dinner party in Simon's house, and the woman that bathed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and the word of the Lord, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Then he turned to the great promises of salvation, and read, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and followed it with the promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

There followed a wonderful scene. It was an illustration of Christ's statement that "the publicans and the harlots" have often a better chance for salvation, since they are not blinded to the fact that they are sinners, than self-righteous people who are too proud to surrender themselves humbly to Jesus. Not only the dying woman, but the entire group, tearfully turned to God.

Two days afterward the visit was repeated. The young woman was then rejoicing in the consciousness that her sins were forgiven and that Christ was her personal Saviour and Lord. She spoke gratefully of the blessedness of the forgiveness of sin and the loving-kindness of her gracious Redeemer. She exhorted all around her to seek Christ, that the past might be forgiven and that the future might be lived in purity of heart and life.

The end came a few days later. Dr. MacArthur officiated at the funeral. The room was filled with men and women of the classes represented on the occasion of the first visit. Again he urged upon them the necessity of forsaking sin and accepting Christ. The closing days of the redeemed woman had had a tremendous effect upon her friends, and they heard his earnest message as the very truth of God. The result was that the woman who was at the head of that house was soundly converted and received into the fellowship of one of the churches of this city, and six others who stood around that deathbed, four women and two men, were converted to Christ, turned away from all their sins, and lived pure lives. O my friend, you cannot tell me anything that Jesus Christ has done for a poor sinner so wonderful that I will not believe it.

And now I come to you and I offer you Christ

as your Saviour. It is a wondrous truth that Jesus comes seeking for an opportunity to dwell in your heart and garrison your soul against every evil that may come against you. It would seem that you ought to be seeking him instead of his seeking you; but in boundless love he seeks you. He comes and knocks at the door of your heart. Will you let him in? How tenderly Mrs. Stowe sings of his coming:

“Knocking, knocking, ever knocking,
 Who is there?
 ’Tis a Pilgrim, strange and kingly,
 Never such was seen before;
 Ah! sweet soul, for such a wonder
 Undo the door.

“No! that door is hard to open;
 Hinges rusty, latch is broken,
 Bid him go.
 Wherefore with that knocking dreary
 Scare the sleep from one so weary?
 Say him, No.

“Knocking, knocking, ever knocking!
 What! Still there?
 O sweet soul, but once behold him
 With the glory-crownèd hair;
 And those eyes, so strange and tender,
 Waiting there;
 Open! Open! Once behold him—
 Him, so fair!

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“Did she open? Doth she? Will she?
So, as wondering we behold,
Grows the picture to a sign,
Pressed upon your soul and mine;
For in every breast that liveth
Is that strange, mysterious door;
Though forsaken and betangled,
Ivy-gnarled and weed-bejangled,
Dusty, rusty, and forgotten—
There the piercèd Hand still knocketh.
And with ever-patient watching,
With the ‘sad eyes true and tender,
With the glory-crownèd hair—
Still a God is waiting there.”

Many of you have been expecting to become Christians all your lives, and I doubt not you are astonished yourselves that so many years should have passed away without your becoming a positive and earnest Christian. It is so easy to let opportunities slip by. What you need is to be brought by God's grace to a decision, and I call you to decide now. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve!” A decision is a turning point, and if you would now decide for Christ and make an open confession of him it would open a new epoch, a new era of divine peace, for your soul.

An interesting story is told of David Farragut. He was a cabin boy to his father, brave George Farragut, who had taken part in the Revolutionary and the Indian wars. The boy was becoming dissipated. One day the father called David into the

cabin, locked the door, and said to him, "David, what do you mean to be?"

"I mean to follow the sea," he said.

"Follow the sea!" exclaimed his father. "Yes, be a poor, miserable, drunken sailor before the mast, kicked and cuffed about the world, and die in a fever hospital in some foreign clime!"

"No, father," the boy replied, "I will tread the quarter-deck and command, as you do."

"No, David; no boy ever trod the quarter-deck with such principles as you have and such habits as you exhibit. You will have to change your whole course of life if you ever become a man."

His father left him, and went on deck. The boy was stunned by the rebuke and overwhelmed with mortification. "'A poor, miserable, drunken sailor before the mast, kicked and cuffed about the world, and die in some fever hospital!' That's my fate, is it? I'll change my life, and I will change it at once. I will never utter another oath, never drink another drop of intoxicating liquor, and never gamble." In later years, when he became the great admiral, he said that God had helped him to keep the vows made that day.

Wendell Phillips went home one night, a boy fourteen years old, from hearing Lyman Beecher preach a sermon that had stirred him to the very core. He went to his room and locked the door,

and in his passionate earnestness he threw himself down flat on his face on the floor, and gave himself to God through Jesus Christ. He promised God from that hour that he would serve him, and prayed God that whatever was right to do he might have the strength to do it, and that whatever was wrong to do might have no power over him. And that was the secret of his strong life.

And so I come to you to-night, pleading for a decision; a life that only drifts always drifts to ruin. Decide now for Christ and righteousness and heaven!

XIII

THE COMFORTER OF SOULS

It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.—*John* xvi, 7, 8.

THE friends to whom Christ spoke these words were sadly in need of comfort. They had given up all and followed him. True, their “all” had not been very much, and yet when a man gives his “all,” though his little world may be small, it is as much to him as is the “all” of the man who deals with the largest affairs. Of this little group Christ was the center. All their hopes and plans for the future rested on him. And now he was going away. Slowly but steadily the black cloud was drawing near, and they could feel already the cold breath of its coming shadow. They could not understand as yet the full meaning of it, and their hearts were heavy at the thought of separation from the best Friend and the noblest Leader any group of men had ever had. So these words which I have read for our text were given to them as words of comfort. Christ tells them that it is better for them that he is going away. His mission is to be a world-wide mission. If he continued to live in a human body,

he could not be with all his disciples at once, but when he departs, and goes back to his native heaven, he will send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who will always be with them, and whose comforting presence need never be withdrawn from their hearts.

There seems something very strange, and at the first glance contradictory, in the statement made here by our Lord, that he goes to send the Comforter to them, and then, in the very first sentence describing the work of the Comforter, he says he will "reprove" the world, convince them of their sin, arouse them to righteousness, and keep them in mind of the judgment. Those two words, "comfort" and "reprove," seem to be words not in harmony with each other; and yet the more we study them the more certain we shall be that they are spoken advisedly and wisely. The only way to comfort a man who is wrong is to get him out of his wrong position and make him right. If a man is living a sinful life the worst enemy he has in the world is the man or the woman who would try to comfort him in his sins and still leave him to go on sinning against God without fear. There can be no salvation, there can be no true peace of the soul, except through the banishment of sin from the heart and the pardon of sin through the acceptance of Christ's death in our behalf. Isaiah voices God's message to us when he cries: "Peace, peace to him

that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

From this and many other passages, as well as from our text, there can be no doubt that the only way we may come into the blessed fellowship and ministry of the Comforter of souls is by being healed of our sins by the Great Physician. As Frederick Robertson aptly says, "Peace and cure must go together." There is no peace for the soul where there is no cure. You may have lulled your conscience to sleep for a while, but the slightest incident may wake it into all the horrors of remorse at any moment if the fact of your sin is still there. Herod gave the order that John the Baptist should be beheaded. His conscience rebuked him. He felt that he had grievously sinned against God. But with all a king's resources he threw himself into business and pleasure, and I have no doubt flattered himself that he would soon forget all about it. But one day one of his courtiers said to him, "Your majesty, I had a strange experience yesterday."

"Is that so?" said Herod. "What was it?"

"I was interested at what I had heard of this strange young rabbi, whom they call Jesus, and so

I went out to one of his meetings. I supposed he was a humbug, of course, but I tell you he did some wonderful things. I saw them bring a man that had the shaking palsy on a bed. There was one man at each corner, and they brought him and laid him down at the feet of the rabbi. Jesus looked at him strangely for a moment, then he took him by the hand, and said, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.' And that man got up and, after he had thanked the rabbi, put his bed over his shoulder and walked off. It would have warmed your heart to see the happiness of those men who had brought him. Then there was a little girl who came leading a blind man. A man who stood by me said that he knew the man, and that he had been born blind. Well, that rabbi spat on the ground in the dust, and reached over and made a little clay out of the spittle, and put it on the man's eyes, and said something—I was too far away to hear what he said—and as sure as I live that man's eyes seemed as clear and as good as mine. He came back, his face all covered with wonder and smiles, and the little girl danced around a while, and then shot off through the crowd to tell her mother. There were lots of other cases, and they tell me that he has cured lepers, and that over at the town Nain he stopped a funeral procession and brought the son of a widow back to life."

Herod had not been much interested at first, but as the story went on it came to have a terrible fascination for him. His under jaw dropped; his eyes bulged out in horror, and at last he broke the story off with a cry of fright as he exclaimed, "It is John! It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded! He has risen from the dead!" Herod's sin would not down; time gave him no peace. And time will give you no peace. There is no greater folly than to think that because you have forgotten your sin for a while God has also forgotten it. There is a law in this world that sin and sorrow shall be joined together. Years may pass by between the sin and its punishment, but God does not need to hurry. He can wait. God's word which I have quoted to you is true, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

There is only one thing that can interfere between sin and its punishment, and that is pardon through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The one thing that can give peace to the sinner is the blood of Christ, so applied to the heart, so cleansing the affections of the soul, that the guilty can go free and the sinning soul be at peace.

Sin is forever making strife and discord in the world, and the Comforter of souls is forever seeking to make peace—peace between man and God, peace between man and man, peace between sev-

ered friends, peace where sin has broken the heart. But he can only give peace and comfort by first reproving sin and securing the consent of the sinner to sin's banishment.

At a great revival meeting in Detroit, Michigan, at a service one afternoon, when the presence of the Holy Spirit was keenly felt by hundreds of people, a very interesting and remarkable event happened, though not many people in the meeting knew about it. There was there that afternoon a man who had had hard usage, but he listened to the preacher with wide-open eyes that were often full of tears. Not very far away from him sat a woman in scanty, worn attire. There was a pathetic expression in her eyes that spoke of hardships and disappointment. Among the great throng of people few seemed more desolate than she. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman was the preacher. He announced for his text the words, "What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?" He began to tell of the day of wrath; he emphasized the awfulness of the day of judgment, and warned his hearers of the all-pervading presence of God. There was no escaping his eye, or the judgment to come. "If you take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, behold, he is there; if you descend into hell, lo, he is there," rang out the warning of the earnest preacher.

The man whom we have noted was all attention, the woman's head was bowed.

"What will you do in the day of judgment? Do you know what it is to pass into eternity?" There was a deep hush on the audience as the speaker paused. Then he went on to describe the terrors of the judgment to the unsaved. He quoted Paul's solemn words, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," and said that every man who is mocking God knows not the day or the hour when he may visit him.

The worn and weary man of whom I have been speaking stared at the preacher with tear-stained eyes; the woman's head was still bowed.

"The way of the transgressor is hard," said Dr. Chapman, in a broken voice. "The day will come, my friends, when, if you do not accept this salvation, God will say to you, 'I never knew you.'" A singer began to sing, "Shall I be saved to-night?" And as he did so the Holy Spirit seemed marvelously to fall upon the people. As the singer closed, Dr. Chapman rose again. He asked those who had a desire to be prayed for, and were willing to accept Christ then and there, to hold up their hands.

Our man whom we have been following had his hand up first of all. Then the woman held up her

hand, and instantly their eyes met. Then a change as sudden came over the expression of both. But they only held the secret of its meaning.

"Those who can say, 'I now confess Jesus Christ as my Saviour,' stand up," said Dr. Chapman, and the man and woman rose to their feet.

As the great throng passed out the man and the woman met at the door. "Tom," she said, then her lips quivered.

"Mary," he responded, as he dashed away a tear. Then their hands met and clasped.

"You have come home, Tom?"

"Yes, Mary," and their eyes told the rest. They went on arm in arm. It was a husband and wife whom sin had separated. Sin had filled their hearts with anger and their lives with strife, but now each heart had found through faith in Jesus Christ the peace and comfort of God that brought them together again.

And that incident is a typical story, for it is a true illustration of the way the Comforter of souls is able to cure all our sorrows. Get rid of your sins. Surrender yourself to Jesus Christ. With your sins forgiven all comfort and peace is possible to your soul.

XIV

LOOSING A SOUL FROM BONDAGE

And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her : and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.—*Luke* xiii, 11-13.

THIS act is fairly typical of the entire ministry of Jesus Christ. He always had an eye open for people who were crippled or infirm, who were handicapped in any way, and he was quick to stretch out the hand of help and give them release from the cruel bondage of their infirmity. Sometimes it was a blind eye, sometimes a deaf ear, occasionally a withered hand; at other times it was a deadly leprosy, and again a consuming fever; but the particular difficulty made no difference to Jesus, for he could remove one just as well as another.

Christ is still doing that work in the world. He is seeking to save men and women and set them free from their most cruel and terrible bondage. Here was a woman who had been in the grip of this awful infirmity for eighteen years. She was bowed over so that she could not walk along the street without attracting everybody's attention to her

crippled condition. Every hour of life was full of pain to her. The doctors could do nothing for her, and she had long since given up all hope of walking straight and upright and graceful like other people, and when she went to the synagogue that Sabbath she had no expectation of finding any release from the bondage of her lifelong infirmity. And then, suddenly, the new rabbi, Jesus, looked at her. She was startled at something searching and yet infinitely kind in his glance.

“Come to me,” he said.

She did not know what to make of it, but she went. And when she drew near to him he laid his hands on her and, with a voice that was sweeter than any music she had ever heard, said, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” And she straightened up; all that cruel stiffness of her joints and muscles disappeared, and she was as straight as any woman in the synagogue. No wonder she glorified God.

I wish to spiritualize this suggestive story. Sin has always had the power to make men crooked and infirm in their characters, and Christ is always seeking to set them loose from its bondage and make them whole again. The strange thing is that many people are crooked and bent by sin who do not seem to know it. It is often well known to other people while they themselves are to a great degree

unconscious of it. Many a man who is not a Christian would flee his sins this very night if he could only see himself as others see him.

A drunkard in New Orleans recently was saved from continuing his career of dissipation in a peculiar manner. The young man in question was of a fine family, and had splendid gifts, but was going down as fast as it was possible for a man to go through strong drink. His friends had pleaded with him, but he had taken their warnings as an insult. One day one of them, who was a court stenographer, determined to try a new tack with him. He was sitting in a restaurant one evening, when the young man in question came in with a companion, taking the table next to him, and sitting down with his back to him and not seeing him. He was just drunk enough to be talkative about his private affairs, and on the impulse of the moment the stenographer pulled out his notebook and took a full shorthand report of every word he said. It was the usual maudlin folly of a young man with his brain muddled by drink, and included a number of highly candid details of his daily life—things which when he was sober he would as soon have thought of putting his hand in the fire as of speaking about to a casual acquaintance. The next morning the stenographer copied the whole thing neatly, and sent it around to his office. In less than ten minutes

he came tearing in with, "What is this, anyhow?" "It's a stenographic report of your monologue at the restaurant last evening," his friend replied, and gave him a brief explanation. "Did I really talk like that?" he asked, faintly. "I assure you it is an absolutely verbatim report," was the reply. He turned pale and walked out. He never drank another drop. He turned to God in deep and humble repentance that very hour. He had caught a glimpse of himself.

Many men would cease not only the sin of drunkenness, but other sins as well, if they could see themselves as others see them. Christ sees all our imperfections, and they must look more terrible to his eyes than they do to the eye of anyone else; but like the mother who hates drunkenness when it appears in her son more than anyone else can hate it, and yet would gladly die to save her boy, so Christ, who did die to save the sinner, does not gaze on our infirmities with an eye of disdain or contempt, but with an eye filled with infinite pity and love.

The sinner is like this poor woman in that he has no power to heal himself. He is held in the grip of sin for which he himself is to blame, but from which he has no power to free himself.

A yacht captain, sailing along the eastern shore of Maryland, saw a splendid specimen of the American eagle speeding along like the wind over the

surface of the water, yet evidently propelled by no effort of its own. In fact, the eagle seemed to be using all its efforts to stay its progress and rise from the water. The captain turned his yacht, headed off the speeding eagle, and succeeded in grabbing it by the neck, although the bird fought fiercely against him with beak and wings.

When the captain got hold of the eagle he discovered why it was taking that strange journey against its will. The eagle's talons were so deeply buried in the back of a big carp that the bird could not get them out. The carp was too heavy for the eagle to rise with, and the eagle too much weight, for the present, for the carp to sink deeper into the water; but the eagle would undoubtedly have been drowned with that fatal clutch he himself had made if the captain had not interfered by cutting him loose and letting him fly away.

Surely that is a clear illustration of the danger and sorrow into which men thrust themselves through sin. Men seize hold on vile and evil things through the strong talons of their affections, and then when they want to get away they cannot. O, how hard is the struggle sometimes to escape, and all in vain. But there is a way of escape. As that captain took his sharp knife and cut the eagle's feet loose from that which held him down to danger and death, so Christ is ready and willing to lift

your feet out of the mire and the clay of your sin, and set them on the rock, and put a new song in your mouth, a song of praise and glory to God.

I am sure that a great many stay away from Christ, and delay the open confession of their sins, because sin has so blinded their eyes that they do not see clearly how terribly real and awful a thing it is. Sin gets into our hearts and so masters us that we are no longer our own master. Paul says, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." An English preacher, commenting on this statement, says that there are men who would have us believe that sin is but the necessary offspring of weakness and ignorance, that it is the unavoidable failure to reach ideal perfection, or that it is the fruit of the insurgent senses which will not be controlled. But this passage teaches us that it is something more—that it is a taint, a corruption, affecting the inner nature, warping, marring, darkening all the soul.

Some people have thought that by cultivating the natural powers the sinner might be slowly refined and purified. But it has always failed. If sin were only weakness there might be hope in the gospel of development. Some men have pointed to education as the moral regenerator, and have claimed that if men were all well educated sin would die out of the world with ignorance. But that is

disproved by the fact that some of the best-educated men that have ever lived have been the most wicked. The fact is that sin is a poison in the very blood, and no mere appeal to the will can bring about the needed change. By merely working on himself, on his body of sin and death, the sinner can do but little in the way of self-restoration. The will has no power to create or re-create. Sin is not merely, an act or a series of acts, it is a crippled state like that of the poor infirm woman. A man can no more by an act of will change his own heart than could that infirm woman by an act of will straighten her body.

Now, when a man or a woman sees intelligently and clearly sin as it is, there always happens what used to be called more frequently than now "conviction for sin." When the Holy Spirit reveals to the sinning soul its true condition it is a terrible sight. Death, inevitable death, is present to him, for the law, stern and unrelenting to eternity, denounces him. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." He has sinned, he is ever sinning, it seems as though he must sin; death he cannot escape. Amazed, hopeless, agonized, the cry breaks from his lips—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And there is silence. Not a voice in the wide world is raised to give him answer of comfort till there is heard that sweetest

voice that ever fell upon a sinner's ears—the voice of the sinner's Saviour, the same voice that charmed the poor infirm woman, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Every one of you may accept that invitation to-night, knowing that Christ will keep his word. On one occasion during the civil war, when Mr. Moody was acting as chaplain, he was awakened one night when he was very tired to go and see a dying soldier. When he began to speak to him about God the soldier said, "He cannot save me; I have sinned all my life." And Moody began to think of his mother a long way off, and he thought probably the mother was praying for her boy even then, and he sat up through the night, telling him promise after promise, praying with him, but nothing would avail. At last he read the third chapter of John, how Nicodemus came to the Master. As he read he noticed that the young fellow's eyes became riveted upon him, and he seemed to drink in every syllable. When he came to the words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," he stopped Mr. Moody, and asked, "Is that true?" "Yes," Moody said. "Well," he said, "I never knew that was in the Bible. Read it again." Leaning on his elbow on the side of the cot, he drew his hands

together tightly, and when Moody had finished reading he said: "That is good! Won't you read it again?" Slowly he repeated the passage the third time. When he had finished he saw that the young soldier's eyes were closed, and the troubled expression on his face had given way to a peaceful smile. His lips moved, and as Moody bent over him to catch what he was saying he heard, in a faint whisper, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He opened his eyes and said, "That is enough. Do not read any more." The next day Mr. Moody found that he had passed away peacefully with the words of that promise on his lips.

You may find your salvation to-night, just as he did, by heeding the invitation and promise of Christ. He is seeking for you. He sees your infirmities, he knows all about your sin; but, bless God, he is just as powerful to save and just as willing to save now as ever, and he is still crying out to sinful men and women, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out!"

XV

THE BEST CHOICE

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—*Luke* x, 42.

A MEMBER of the English Parliament visited Andrew Carnegie in his great castle in Scotland. After they had had a long talk together the rich man drove with his guest to the station. As they went Mr. Carnegie spoke about his wealth and said, bitterly: "I am not really to be envied. How can my wealth help me? I am sixty years old, and I cannot digest my food. I would give you all my millions if you could give me youth and health." Then there came another remark, which the listener declares he will never forget. They had driven on for some time in silence, when Mr. Carnegie suddenly turned, and with a hushed voice, and with bitterness and depth of feeling quite indescribable, said: "If I could make Faust's bargain I would. I would gladly sell anything to have half my life over again," and his visitor saw his hands clench as he spoke.

There could not be a clearer illustration than that of the worthlessness of mere wealth as a treasure, so transient is its power to give happiness.

There are so many things that can take it away, and even if it remains, as with Mr. Carnegie, youth passes, health disappears, and the ministry of wealth loses its power to bless. But, thank God, there are some things within the reach of us all that cannot be taken away.

Mary of Bethany was one of the few people who saw into the heart of the mission of Jesus. Her love discerned what stronger intellects could not fathom. She accepted Jesus as her Lord and crowned him in her heart. Christ said that she had made a choice that could never be taken from her, and it has been true even for this world, for Mary of Bethany is one of the immortals. We see her on still another occasion. It is the day that Simon, the rich Pharisee, invited Jesus to dine with him. And as Simon is treating the Master with a sort of patronizing superciliousness Mary of Bethany comes into the room. She came unbidden. She had brought with her, with which to anoint the head of Jesus, an alabaster box of precious ointment, very costly indeed. So costly was it that some of his own disciples thought it a wasteful thing. But Jesus received it with gratitude and love, and he said about it, and her, "I say unto you, that whosoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, then this also that she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her." I wonder if it has

occurred to you that we have in New York harbor a monument to Mary of Bethany? The next time you go down the harbor, and you see that grand statue, "Liberty Enlightening the World," remember that the inscription on its side was uttered by Jesus of Nazareth. "She hath done what she could" Mary chose immortality for this world when she chose Christ; and far more than that, for this world itself will grow old, and be rolled together as a scroll, but Mary shall be loved and honored by her divine Lord throughout all eternity.

No other choice we can make will continue to be appropriate and useful to us under all circumstances. The changing scenes of life often reduce values or take away the value entirely. Certain things that are of great importance to us at one period of life are looked upon with contempt at another period; but if you choose Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your Lord, and worship him with all your heart, there will not be one day from youth to old age that he will not be the source of more happiness and inspiration and comfort than all the other treasures of life put together. Not only so, but as life draws to a close, and as death looms up in the distance, Christ will appear the more precious and indispensable at the moment all other treasures are dropping from your nerveless fingers.

In the Kentucky backwoods a young woman lay dying on her humble cot. Suddenly she roused and called, "Abraham!"

A boy almost destitute of clothing, who had been watching the birds as they flew from one tree to another outside the cabin door, hastened to her side, and asked in a troubled voice, "What is it?"

She drew him within her feeble arms, and said, in a voice weak and tremulous, yet still thrilling with a mother's love and hope:

"I am going to leave you, Abe, and O, how hard it is to part with you! How beautiful it is outdoors! It is beautiful wherever God is, and I am going to meet him in a brighter world than this. I learned to love him at the old camp meetings, and I want you to learn to love him too.

"I have not had much to make me happy," she continued, still more slowly, and with a heavy sigh—"I have not had a great deal to make me happy; but my voice has never failed to rise in praise whenever a feeling of thanksgiving has come to me.

"Abraham Lincoln, you have my heart. I am thankful God gave you to us. Love everybody, hinder nobody, and the world will be glad some day that you were born. This is a beautiful world to the loving and believing. I am grateful for life;

for everything, but, more than all else, because you have my heart."

"But he can't sing, Nancy!"

A tall pioneer in buckskin stood in the cabin doorway. He saw death's shadow in the sunlight that fell on the floor. He had added a ripple of laughter to his words, for he wanted to cheer his wife even though she was passing from him.

The woman was silent. Thomas Lincoln approached his wife's deathbed. Then he repeated his words, still more kindly: "But he can't sing like you, Nancy!"

"The heart sings in many ways," she replied, very feebly. "Some hearts make other hearts sing. Abraham may not have my voice, but he has my heart, and he may make others sing."

And so Nancy Lincoln went away, leaving the blessing of her pure life and of her loving, grateful faith in God as a benediction on the head of Abraham Lincoln. Surely Nancy Lincoln had chosen, like Mary, the treasure that never could be taken away from her. If the good in heaven are permitted to watch over the careers of earth, what songs she must have sung during all those years when Abraham Lincoln so bravely and with such sublime patience, driven again and again to God for help, carried the nation's burdens on his shoulders and the nation's sorrows in his heart. How much

American civilization and the progress of Christianity and humanity in the world owe to the fact that Nancy Lincoln, that plain backwoods settler's wife, at some camp-meeting altar gave her heart to God, and became a sincere Christian, we can never know; but I wish to impress it on all our hearts that it is possible for every one of us, if we become faithful Christians, to not only have comfort in our spiritual treasures, but to be able thereby to enrich and bless all who come in touch with us.

Nothing makes me sadder than to see fathers or mothers with children growing up around them, refusing Christ and failing to give to their children the example and the influence which will after a while be the very dearest treasure that the child can have. I have never yet heard anyone speak with thanksgiving or gratitude because his father or mother was not a Christian. Whenever that has been the case it has been a fact for silence or for sad regrets. But how many have I heard—hundreds and thousands of people—thank God for the memory of the prayers and the example of Christian parents!

At an experience meeting in England, not long ago, the oldest man in the room, white-headed, venerable, and plain of speech, stood up and said: "My mother was an ailing woman for years. When I was a young man I walked into Bradford and

bought a rocking-chair for her. I carried it home on my back, about three miles, and for fourteen years my mother sat in that chair every day. Then she died. Friends, when I pray to God every morning, before going to my work, I kneel me down by that chair!"

No mother could ask for a more enduring monument than to leave behind her such an influence as would summon her children to prayer and praise for so many years.

I do not see how parents who believe in God and in heaven and in Christ can let the impressionable years of their children go by, knowing that sickness and death is abroad in the land and that they may be called at any moment—I do not see how they can let the days go by without becoming themselves so earnestly Christian that they will constantly be leaving some touch upon their children the memory of which in case they were called from them would lead them toward heaven.

A little boy was sailing a boat with a playmate a good deal larger than himself. The boat had sailed some distance out into the pond, and the big boy said: "Go in, Jim, and get her. It isn't over your ankles, and I've been in every time."

"I daren't," said Jim. "I'll carry her all the way home for you, but I can't go in there; she told me I mustn't dare to."

“Who’s ‘she?’ ”

“My mother,” replied Jim, rather softly.

“Your mother! Why, I thought she was dead,” said the big boy.

“That was before she died. Eddie and I used to come here and sail our boats, and she never let us come unless we had strings enough to haul in with. I ain’t afraid—you know I’m not; only she did not want me to, and I can’t do it.”

One of the best men I have ever known told me that his mother died when he was only three years old, and after she was gone they told him how his mother had prayed for him, and how she used to pray to God every day. When he was four years old he was put to live in a family that did not believe in God or in prayer, and he saw nothing but wickedness about him; but the memory of that mother’s prayers followed him, and he gave his heart to God before he was six years old, and all his life he has been a Christian with the infinitely gracious background of that saintly mother, who was called home when he was only three years old. She had chosen the treasure that could never be taken away. Thank God, you may have that treasure to-night. The greatest treasure on the earth may be had for the asking—yes, greater than any treasure on earth, the greatest treasure that can come to an immortal soul, you may have to-night without

money and without price. There are many things you think you need, but Jesus Christ says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

XVI

JUDGING OURSELVES

And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews ? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.—*Mark* xv, 2.

IN the great pictures which have been painted of this scene of the meeting of Pilate and Jesus, in the poems that have been written about it, and in the sermons and essays that have portrayed the striking situation, it has been common to call it, "Christ Before Pilate." But the truer order would be, "Pilate Before Christ." It was not so much the judgment of Pilate on Jesus as it was the judgment of Pilate on himself. There is something very significant and striking in this language of Jesus to Pilate. Pilate was a great man for evading responsibility, and it was in the same spirit that drove him afterward to wash his hands before the mob, to try to clear himself from the cruel and unjust condemnation of Jesus, that Pilate asked Jesus to judge himself, and say whether he was the king or not. But this Christ declined to do. He threw the judgment back on Pilate in the words, "Thou sayest it."

So we are judging ourselves every day by our attitude toward Jesus Christ. We have on our

hands the same question that Pilate had, and which he asked of the people to relieve himself when they wanted Barabbas released: "What shall I do then with this Jesus which is called Christ?"

That is a question which I want to push home to our hearts to-night. What judgment are you going to pass on Jesus Christ? Christ comes claiming to be a king. As such, he claims to have the right to all your worship and your service. You cannot treat him as you would anyone else. You must either reject his claim as impudent and unwarranted or you must accept his claim as proper and right. Your judgment in the case will greatly alter your conduct. If you judge Christ to have no right to your service, no claim on your honor or worship, then you will go on, indifferent toward him, worshiping your own pride, seeking success in your own way, and expecting to meet death at last without any help from heaven; but if, on the other hand, you admit that Christ has the right to your service, that he has a just claim to your honor and love and worship, then you are in duty bound to at once obey him and do whatever he asks at your hands. There could be no greater inconsistency than to admit that Christ is the true king and lord of your soul, and has every right to your worship and your love, and then go on living in indifference to his desires and commands. What say

you about Christ to-night? Is he your rightful king, or is he only a pretender?

Your judgment must again be placed upon Christ as a Saviour from sin. Christ comes offering to be your Saviour from the guilt and condemnation of sin. He came into the world and lived a life of hardship and suffering, and finally died upon the cross, that he might become the Saviour of the world, that he might make propitiation for the sins of the whole world. And from the day he forgave the dying thief, while he was hanging on the cross, until now, men have been seeking in Christ's mercy and love and through his atonement the forgiveness of their sins.

Sin is in all lands and among all peoples. People everywhere have felt its cruel hand. It has destroyed the peace, it has defiled the purity, it has outraged the innocence, it has broken the heart of people in every land under heaven. The beginning of every religion, the foundation of every ethical philosophy, has been because of the consciousness of sin and a persistent longing of the human heart to free itself from that awful "body of death." But everywhere failure has met the most ardent seeker save the man or the woman who has knelt at the feet of Jesus Christ. There the only relief has been found. Christ has never failed to give satisfaction to any earnest, seeking soul. In him the

proud and the haughty have found the grace of humility. At the foot of his cross the miser has found generosity and love. In association with Jesus the drunkard has gained power to be his own master and has gone forth a free man. Men and women whose consciences were loaded down with guilt have lost their burden at his feet and have gone away with a new self-respect and with heart so light that they have sung songs of gladness and praise. There is no fact in history more thoroughly established than the fact that Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins. Perhaps there is no other fact so well established, for the evidence runs over hundreds of years. There are millions and millions of people on the earth to-day who, if it were necessary, would go to the stake and suffer martyrdom before they would recant their evidence that Jesus Christ has pardoned their sins.

Now, what do you say about Jesus Christ as a Saviour? Christ comes offering to save you from your sins. He offers to pay your debt to the broken law of God. He offers to lift the burden of guilt from your conscience. He offers to cleanse your heart from evil and impure desires. He offers to come into your soul as King and Saviour, and dwell there from day to day a sympathetic Friend, a Friend with wisdom to advise and with unlimited power to give aid in every time of need. What will

you do with this Saviour? Is he to be your Saviour? Nobody can answer that but yourself. Christ is standing before you with heart-searching gaze, and saying to you as he did to Pilate, "Thou sayest it."

Christ claims to be our Intercessor between man and God. We cannot approach God except through him. Our sins have broken God's holy law. We have no merit in ourselves, but we have much demerit. The law says, "The wages of sin is death." But Christ went and took the punishment in our stead. "He was bruised for our iniquities." He died for us, so that God might still be just and yet be "the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus." And as the high priest in the olden time was accustomed to enter into the holiest place with the sacrifice and there plead for the people, so Christ, at once our Sin Offering and our Priest, ascended on high and entered into the holiest place of all that he might be an Intercessor for us. Isaiah prophesied this hundreds of years before Christ came into the world, when he said, "He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." And Stephen, the first of the long line of Christian martyrs, when his enemies were gnashing upon him with their teeth and were stoning him to death in their hate, kneeled down and looking upward cried, with a face so glowing that even his enemies de-

clared it was the face of an angel, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

What will you do with Christ the Intercessor? He offers to intercede for you in the court of heaven, he offers to be your High Priest, and stand before the throne of God to plead not your merits but the merits of his own blood, shed on Calvary's cross in your behalf. Christ stands before you now, asking what you will do with him as an Intercessor. You must answer it for yourself. Those sad and loving eyes are on your face, and Jesus is saying to you, "Thou sayest it."

Christ offers to prepare for your happy immortality. He offers, if you will accept his forgiveness and love and permit him to reign in your heart and commune with you in sweet fellowship through your earthly life, not only to fit you for heaven, but to fit a place in heaven for you. We are all of us hastening on toward the future, that future that lies on the other side of the gates of death. Life is uncertain to every one of us. It is the unexpected that happens. Going home to-night, or in the slumber afterward before the dawn, you are liable to come short up against the gates of death. No man has a lease of his life for a single day, and it cannot come to an end so suddenly that it will be more sudden than is happening to others every day

in the year. Surely there can be no man so full of folly that he does not feel that anything that offers to prepare the way for happiness in the life beyond is worth the most serious and honest consideration. Christ is the only teacher that has come to us from the throne of God and has gone back again to dwell in the court of heaven. And he has declared that he will look out for us there, and that everyone that will love him and give his heart to him shall be the special object of his care and love, and that when death comes it shall be no lonely going out into the darkness. When he was going away from his disciples he talked the matter over in the most comforting way with them, and said, gently: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." How different that makes the thought of death! We shall not go down into the grave with the body, but Christ will meet us and lead us to the home which he has prepared for us. He will introduce us to our heavenly Father, and the angels, and the great and good, and we shall rejoice in the fellowship of loved ones who have shared with us in the love of Christ on earth.

I have seen a great many Christians die, and, as Wesley said, "they die well." I have never known Christ to forsake or fail to give comfort to a Christian believer in the hour of death. On the other hand, I have seen many a sick room that was pervaded with an atmosphere of heavenly courage, and I have watched the going away of men and women and children where the dying have not only been without the shadow of a fear, but with infinite joy and confidence and with smiling, rapturous faces have gone to meet their Lord.

Now, what are you going to do with Christ, who comes asking to be your representative in heaven, and offering to fit for you a heavenly mansion, and to be at once your comforter on earth and your friend before God? Die you must. How soon you cannot tell. What will you do with this offer of Jesus Christ assuring you of a happy and victorious immortality? The question comes home to your heart to-night. You must either accept him or reject him. Christ stands there knocking before the door of your heart. His tender gaze is fixed upon you, as it was long ago upon Pilate, and those gentle lips are saying, "Thou sayest it." You are your own judge. By the flexible instrument of your own will you must form and seal your eternal destiny. God help you!

XVII

WITNESSES AND TESTIMONY

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness.—*John* iii, 11.

IT is good in a world so full of doubt to find some things that can be known. Christ is talking to Nicodemus about the new birth which is necessary to salvation, and he declares that it is something which men know about as an absolute certainty, and that it is a great folly not to receive testimony of competent witnesses concerning this as readily as about anything else. Now, the message I have for you to-night is along this line. The salvation which we preach to you is something that may be experienced in a human heart and life. Multitudes of men and women have obeyed the Gospel. They have confessed their sins and forsaken them, and have asked of Christ divine forgiveness. The burden has been lifted from their consciences. They have been given a new impulse toward righteousness, and in multitudes of instances the whole current of life has been changed. Now, we claim that this testimony ought to be sufficient to convince any intelligent mind and persuade any true heart to turn to God.

I am convinced that, despite all that is said about the failings of church members and professed Christians, there is in many who claim to be skeptical far more confidence than they are often willing to admit in the divine power of Jesus Christ to control the heart and the life and preserve the soul from evil.

A Texas ranger, a sort of mounted policeman to protect the people from cattle robbers, recently told an experience he had as a guest in a dugout on one of his rounds.

He had ridden hard all day, tracking some guilty men. As the sun went down he saw smoke curling up from the ground. He rode toward it. No living thing could be seen. He saw the dugout, and knew people were living there by the smoke coming from the dirt chimney. He checked his horse before the doorway, and shouted, "Halloa!"

Somebody inside shouted back, "Halloa yourself!"

To feel his way toward a chance of stopping for the night, he called back, "Can you tell me where I can get lodging for the night?"

"Forty miles ahead of ye!" was the sharp, curt answer.

He was very tired and hungry, and the thought of forty miles more over the prairie made him heart-sick. But there seemed no help for it. He must

go, since there was no hope contained in the harsh answer given to him of getting lodging there. So he tightened his reins, and clucked, and spurred his horse to move on.

"You blame fool, you! What you gwine to ride forty mile this here time o' night for?" was yelled at him.

He turned and stared at a grizzly, red-headed old man standing in the doorway of the dugout. He was big and tall, with long red beard and eyelashes. He waved to him, and ordered him, "Take your critter down there in the hollow and tether it, and come in here."

With all his gruff talk, the ranger felt it safer to risk the night in the dugout than in forty miles of riding in the dark across the plains, so he dismounted and accepted the invitation. When he went into the dugout, he found it anything but encouraging. Two long bowie knives dangled from the man's belt, as well as two pistols, while he kept a rifle within reach of his hand. After a little desultory conversation a shadow in the doorway that obstructed the light made the ranger look up. Another rough, tall fellow stepped inside, loaded down with knives and pistols in his belt. The old man nodded toward the stranger and said to the newcomer, "Son, this here fellow happened by jist before night, and I gin him welcome."

The young man gave him a very slight acknowledgment and proceeded to get supper. The humble supper was soon over, and it was a very uncomfortable meal to the ranger, who now thoroughly believed that he would be murdered that night; but at the close of the supper the old man went to a shelf against the dirt wall and took down a mustard box. He opened it, and said, as he looked the ranger straight in the face: "Stranger, we goes to bed right arter supper. Before we does we allers reads outen this here little book. The old woman died and left us two year ago. Son reads outen this every night 'cause it was hern. She allers read outen it. It was her onlyist book she brought when we moved outen here. We is been powerful broke up ever since she took sick and died, and we put her out yonder under that scrub pine. When we reads outen her book somehow it 'pears like we ain't so lonesome, and it keeps us from losing heart about her."

The old man took from the inside of the mustard box a very small Bible, and handed it reverently to his son, who sat down on the floor and read a chapter by the flickering firelight. All the ranger's desperate suspicion vanished into thin air as he watched the faces of the two lonely men as the words were read from the dead woman's Bible, who in her isolated habitation from church or neighbors had left

such a sacred remembrance of herself in her humble home. The younger man read a chapter, and closed the book. The older one took it reverently and put it back into the mustard box, and placed it on the shelf.

They stretched themselves upon pallets upon the dirt floor. The ranger went to sleep with no suspicions that he might be killed. He felt that two men, desperate, and armed as they were with weapons which they did not lay aside even to sleep, who kept up the memory of the dead wife and mother by reading a chapter each evening from the Bible, which teaches men the path of right, could not be murderers. And they were not.

This true incident of frontier life illustrates how even a slight association with the Bible, and with one who had loved and trusted it, had tamed the savage in desperate men and made them trustworthy. How much more should the testimony of those who have opened their hearts to the full presence and power of Christ insure our believing in the divine Lord who can work such miracles of blessing!

A Swiss artist who was an avowed infidel, and was blasphemously antagonistic to Jesus Christ, went to Sheffield, England, in 1880. His business there was to make a caricature of a Salvation Army meeting. He went there on that errand, and scanned the faces

of the people. With his own heart like the troubled sea that could not find rest, tossed and driven by tempests of passion, and tormented by a conscience burdened with sin, he looked on the assembled worshipers and saw peace written on their faces and an inward joy beaming from their countenances. The sight convinced him that Christianity was true. He threw up his contract and gave his own heart to Christ.

A young minister became very greatly interested in a family living near his church who were outspoken in their opposition to religion. He called on the lady one day and she told him that she had no faith in such things and wanted nothing to do with the church. "Well," he said, "we are going to pray for you. You are the mother of beautiful children, who ought to be brought up Christians, and without mentioning your name we will pray for you at the church until you are converted to God."

"Surely you cannot mean this?"

"Yes, indeed, I do."

He called on her several times, and each time she asked him almost excitedly, "Are you praying for me?" And he replied, "Yes, we are." She would have done anything to induce him to stop, and she declared that she never would become a Christian; but after a while her spirit of curiosity was so greatly aroused that she began to attend the meetings.

There the Lord met her and convinced her of sin. A few days later, when calling on her, the minister saw that there was a complete change. Her face was lighted up with joy. Something had happened.

"Why, Mrs. Thomas, what's the matter? You look very happy."

"Happy? Yes, I am happy. I have got Christ, and I am saved!"

"Praise God," said the minister. "Tell me about it."

She said: "I could not bear the thought of all your prayers hanging over my head. I felt satisfied with myself, but I knew you were not satisfied about me. I tried to forget it, but it haunted me night and day. When you preached the other Sunday about the woman falling down before Jesus, and telling him all the truth, I felt simply awful. I came out of the church with the question ringing in my ears, 'Dear sinner, won't you fall down before Jesus and tell him all the truth?' For several days I tried to shake off the thought, but I felt worse and worse, so I got down on my knees, told him all the truth, and accepted him as my Saviour. I can hardly believe it is true, and my infidel husband thinks it is a miracle; but, thank God, I know in my heart I am saved. O do kneel down with me, and pray for my poor husband, that he may be saved also." They knelt and prayed earnestly that God

would work upon the husband's heart and bring him to accept Christ.

Leaving the wife brimming over with joy and thankfulness to God for his great goodness, the minister hurried to the husband's place of business. Drawing him aside, he said: "Mr. Thomas, everybody knows you as a man who professes not to believe in God, in the devil, in the Bible as God's word, in heaven, or in hell. Is that so?"

He said: "I'm afraid that I have never believed in these things, but rather opposed them."

"Well, now, I want to ask you a question: Your wife has been converted. She has given her heart to God. She has started to walk on the way to heaven as a Christian. Now I want to ask you honestly, 'Do you believe in your wife's conversion?' "

He answered at once: "Believe it? Why, I can't help believing it. It beats me altogether to explain it. There is no doubt that something wonderful has happened to her. Why, she now reads her Bible, kneels down to pray with the children, kneels down and prays before retiring to bed, and even several times she has actually got out of bed in the middle of the night when she thought I was asleep and begun praying for me. I never thought there was anything in religion before, but I don't know what to think. Religion must have something in it, if it can make such an alteration in a woman

like my wife, for it certainly takes a lot to move her."

The fact of his wife's real conversion, her changed life, her testimony, and her prayers for his conversion very strongly influenced him, and in less than a week he gave himself unreservedly to the Lord Jesus.

Now I come to you this evening with the testimony of Christian experience. Here we are about you. You would take our testimony in court about the gravest and most important things. The testimony of any three or four of us here would mean the life or death of a man in any case of that sort. And here we are, scores of us, with nothing to gain by bearing anything but a perfectly true witness, and we do testify to you that Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and that we know it because he has pardoned us and given us a conscience at peace with God. And we come asking you to accept Christ on our evidence and test him for yourself. Thank God, it is not a mere theory; it is a matter of experience. Obey Christ and you shall know for yourself that it is true. Come, "taste, and see that the Lord is good!"

XVIII

THE DIVINE CHRIST

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.—*John xiv, 6.*

THIS is one of those rare gems of Scripture where great truth is packed into the shortest, simplest words, that even a little child can understand. Christ makes three statements about himself. He declares that he is the way, and the truth, and the life. Let us try to study the text in as simple and straightforward a manner as that in which the Master has given it to us.

First, Christ declares, "I am the way." The very manner in which this text is stated shows that it is a plain way. It was not meant that it should be hard to find. David long ago prayed God, "Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." There are many pitfalls along the way of life, and the most careful and prudent will pass through very many uncomfortable experiences. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the road to heaven is a plain path. If you tell me that you do not think so, because you have lived in the world for many years and have not found it, then there is one thing I know about you—I know you have not come

to Christ. For he is the way, and he is so open-hearted and open-handed that no one can seek him simply and honestly without finding him. There is no aristocracy about Jesus.

A German paper tells a pretty story of a courteous act of the king of Wurtemberg. A soldier was returning to the barracks of Ludwigsburg from an excursion in the suburbs. It was near the time for the evening drill, and he was in fear of being late. Suddenly a small vehicle driven by a man in civilian's clothes appeared. "May I take the vacant seat at your side, sir?" asked the soldier. "I am late for drill."

"I'll be glad of your company," came the reply.

The trooper took his seat. A few minutes later, looking at his watch, he grew pale. "Pardon me," he went on, "but might I ask you to drive faster? I have a great fear of my captain, who is a strict disciplinarian. If I am a minute late he will put me in the guardhouse."

"To what barracks do you belong?"

"The K—— barracks."

"Very well; we shall arrive in time."

The driver whipped up his team, and in a short time drew up before the gate of the barracks.

"Thank you, sir," said the soldier in descending.

While the young trooper was still bowing his acknowledgments the officer on duty at the armory

had ordered the guard to present arms. To the soldier's astonishment, his driver had been the king.

But Jesus Christ came far closer than that to the hearts of men and women. He went fishing with his disciples. He ministered to them and to the poor and afflicted with his own hands. He laid his own palm upon the brow of the fever-stricken. It was his own touch by which he made the blind to see and the deaf to hear. No man was so leprous or possessed of demons so malignant, no woman was so lost to reputation and character, that Jesus Christ drew away from them or treated them coldly or with reserve. There was no reserve in the nature of Jesus. He came on earth to be the way over which man might travel to God, and his heart is as open as the highway on which men tread with their feet or drive their wagons. O my friends, it is a plain way. It is easy to find, and it is easy to keep.

There is no stern ticket-taker to scan the people who come desiring to enter upon this way. Over the gate is written, in letters of living light, "Who-soever will may come." I am sure that takes you in.

A very poor, ignorant old man had come under some religious influence and had become interested in his soul's salvation. He had taken to reading the Bible. His wife did not care about it, and one day she said to him, "Why, James, man, I wonder that

you trouble yourself over that old Bible. You're no scholar, and you'll make nothing out with all your studying. For my part, I think there is a deal more satisfaction in a newspaper." And Hannah Simpson, as she spoke, left her work at the other end of the kitchen and, wiping her hands on her apron, came and stood looking over her husband's shoulder as he sat at the table near the fire with an old-fashioned family Bible open before him.

James took no heed of his wife's presence, his brows being knit over his task, his horny finger making slow progress over the paper, tracing out the letters of the words he was striving to read. "W-h-o," he spelled, "s-o-e-v-e-r---aye, but that's a heavy word!" And he breathed a deep sigh of mingled excitement and discouragement. "I can make out that it's about something rare and good," he exclaimed again, after he had slowly and laboriously spelled his way through the remainder of the verse. "'Let him take the water of life freely,' that's just what the preacher said, and he told us that 'water of life' meant salvation; but who is to take it? That beats me." Then, glancing around in his perplexity, he became conscious for the first time that his wife was near.

"Hannah, I wish you could tell me what that long word is."

Hannah, who scarcely knew one letter from an-

other, bent down and looked closely at the "long word." Then she shook her head.

"No, James, I can't help you; it's all Greek to me. If our little Tim had lived we'd have made him a scholar. But don't take on about it, man. Maybe it don't mean anything in particular, after all."

So Hannah returned to her work, casting occasional sympathizing glances at her husband as he still bent over the book, and wishing with an increased soreness of her mother-heart that their little Tim had not been taken; the house had been so lonesome ever since, and that was it surely that had set James to studying and saying such strange things about being a sinner.

While Hannah's thoughts were thus busy her husband sat still and pondered. For some weeks past he had been carrying a heavy load on his heart. He scarcely knew how it first came there. It was strangely mixed up in his thoughts with the death of his child and a hymn that had been sung at little Tim's grave by the scholars of the Sunday school that he used to attend. James had always been a steady man, but he had lived with scarcely a thought of God, and his Sabbaths had been spent in careless, idle lounging instead of being used for the worship of God and the development of heart and soul. But when the dearly loved child had suddenly stepped

from his father's side into a solemn eternity, speaking to the last of "Lord Jesus," and smiling joyfully as the Good Shepherd took the little lamb in his arms, James realized what a life of terrible trifling his had been, and ever since he had been groping after the truth as it is in Jesus.

Only the Sunday before the words of a street preacher had fallen on his ear, words that told of the "Water of Life," and of the love of Jesus in obtaining it for poor, perishing sinners; and James had got a glimpse of the truth that made him long painfully for more. He knew now that this burden on his heart was unforgiven sin, and the preacher had said that Jesus would forgive sin.

Then James, in his slow way, had reasoned it out that to take the "Water of Life" and to get sin pardoned were perhaps the same thing. There were two things about which he was quite clear. He needed salvation, and he would not rest until he found out how to get it; and he thought that if he could but discover who it was that was so freely invited in that "long word" to take the "Water of Life" in the Scripture he had been reading it would throw great light on the subject.

Suddenly he had a happy idea. He knew of a boys' boarding school, and he thought one of those boys would know the meaning of that "long word." He hurried down the street until he came to the

outskirts of where some boys were playing ball. A good-humored-looking young fellow came running after the ball near the fence where James Simpson was standing.

"I say, young master, can I have a word with you?"

"You can have two or three words if you like, and if you'll be quick about it," said the jolly boy; "but the fellows will want me back in a minute."

"I thought you'd, maybe, tell me what these letters make up when they are put together," said James, and, with the air of a great schoolboy repeating his lesson, he slowly spelled out the long word that had so perplexed him.

"That's *whosoever*," said the boy, proudly.

"And will you be pleased to tell me what *whosoever* means?" asked James, anxiously.

"O, it means you, me, or anybody."

"Thank you kindly, young sir; you've done me a great service."

And James Simpson gave his heart to Christ as he walked home that day. It came upon him like a great burst of sunshine. He kept saying over and over, "You, me, or anybody."

I thank God that that is still what it means, and that all the great blessings of salvation are open to everyone that will come to Christ to-day. Not one need be left behind.

Christ is the truth. The truth about God is in him. The truth about man is in Jesus Christ. The truth about heaven and immortality all centers in Jesus. Many men and women who call themselves truth-seekers go on through weary years in their search after truth, and grow more discouraged and more restless and uneasy with the search, because they do not search in the right place. Christ is the great source of truth concerning all the great problems of man and his destiny. The greatest minds the world has ever seen have found that in Jesus Christ alone could they find satisfying spiritual truth. My brother, come to Jesus and find the truth about yourself. He knows what is in man. He knows what is in you. He knows the longings and the desires of your heart. He alone can pardon your sins, purify your spirit, inspire your soul, and comfort your heart.

Christ is the life. No one else is able to quicken our life as does Jesus Christ.

The story is told of Mendelssohn that at a concert at which he was to play he was late in arriving, and meanwhile a local organist filled up the interval of waiting with a selection of Scottish airs. Mendelssohn, when he came, slipped unobserved into his place at the organ, and, putting his hands upon the keyboard, carried on, without any break, the Scottish strain with his own brilliant improvising.

At once a thrill went through the audience. They felt the change and, looking up, saw the explanation of it. The master himself was there. So Christ is the great Master in his power to give life to the human heart. When Christ comes, and when his touch is felt upon our heart, and that most marvelous of musical instruments gives forth its music from under the hand of the Master, everyone knows that Christ has come.

Christ is the fountain of life. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Though you are dead in trespasses and in sins, Christ is able to bring you from the dead. He is able to arouse your soul and to give you freedom from your awful bondage of sin. He can speak into life your nobler powers that have been slumbering almost in unconsciousness. He alone can awaken your whole being to its splendid possibility of being a child of God.

I am sure many of you must feel that you have been living far beneath your privilege. You have been living as though this world were all. You have gone on as though everything ended at the grave. You have lived as though you had no soul, as though there were no immortality, as though there were no heaven, no hell, and no Christ to be your Saviour and fit you for noble living here and glorious living beyond. My friends, you are not

mere creatures of the earth, to eat and drink and look after your present appearance, like an ox in his stall or a horse in his pasture! No, no, you are infinitely greater than that. You are a child of the Infinite, and there is a life for you that feels even here the throb of eternity in its pulse-beat. Jesus Christ can waken that life in you, and give it such power that it will sustain you amid all life's sorrows and struggles and grow great and glorious in you as you near the crowning day beyond the gates of death. Yield him all your heart, and all your life!

XIX

THE GREAT RANSOM

The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—*Mark x, 45.*

DR. ROBERTSON NICOLL, in his sermon on "Gethsemane, the rose-garden of God," brings out with great clearness the fact that this idea of atonement, of ransom through the shedding of blood, the giving of the life itself in sacrifice, is elemental in the very idea of religion. The word "bless" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for "blood," and the idea dimly aimed at is that before you can really bless another you must part with your life, or some of your life, for him. It takes a life to save a life. There was no way that man could be saved except by the life and death of Jesus. The mob that gathered about the foot of the cross uttered a greater truth than they knew when they said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save." He could not save others and save himself. Man could only be ransomed and redeemed from his sins by the Saviour's blood. I want above all things to place this thought before you simply and plainly—that Jesus Christ took your place and gave his life on the cross as a ransom for you.

On one of Abraham Lincoln's excursions to Fortress Monroe, in 1863, his attention was directed to a narrow door, bound with iron, on one of the war vessels, the use of which he was anxious to learn.

"What is this?" he asked.

"O, that is the 'sweat box,' " was the reply. "It is used for refractory and insubordinate seamen. A man in there is subjected to steam heat and has very little ventilation. It generally brings him to terms very quickly.

President Lincoln's curiosity was aroused. "This," he said to himself, "is treatment to which thousands of American seamen are probably subjected every year. Let me try it for myself, and see what it really is."

Taking off his hat, he entered the inclosure, which he found to be little more than three feet in actual width. He gave orders that at a signal from himself the door should be immediately opened. It was then closed, and the steam turned on.

He had been inside hardly three minutes before the signal was given. President Lincoln had experienced enough of what was then regarded as necessary punishment for American seamen. There was very little ventilation, and the short exposure to the hot and humid air had almost suffocated him.

Turning to the Secretary of the Navy, the Presi-

dent ordered that no such inclosure as the "sweat box" should ever after be allowed on any vessel flying the American flag.

It was not an hour after this order had been given before the news had spread to many vessels, and many of the older sailors wept for joy. How they loved Abraham Lincoln for that humane relief, and yet he had only gone into their place for three minutes; and the relief how small compared to that which Jesus Christ came to bring.

There is in England on the Tichborne estate a tract known as "the Tichborne Crawls." Many years ago the English lord who owned this land had a humane and sensible wife who took sorely to heart the condition of their wretched tenants and made every effort in her power to help them; but she was a cripple.

The peasants on the estate, owning nothing, lived idle and squalid lives, being simply retainers of the manorial house. Their only inspiration of a better sort was their love for their mistress. The lady could see that they needed the spur of industry and responsibility, and she often besought her husband to set off to them a tract of arable land, giving each laborer a life lease of the soil and the annual proceeds of his tillage. Her importunities finally tired him out, and he told her, half in anger and half in jest, that he would set apart to the poor

tenants for nine hundred and ninety-nine years as much land as she would travel around alone in a month, beginning at the corner of the parish churchyard.

The crippled lady was resolute, and she surprised her husband by taking him at his word. Carried by her attendants to the churchyard corner, she began her severe task, but she could not allow them to assist her. She persevered. Every morning, excepting Sundays, she was set down at her last finishing point, and made her painful day's progress, in all weathers, till, at the end of the month, she had surrounded a number of acres that astonished herself and everybody else. With her bent body and feeble limbs her motion was more like a crawl, but she won the land, and the tract has been called "the Tichborne Crawls" ever since.

The poor tenants, who with pity and shame had witnessed their good lady's suffering for their sake and had begged her in vain to desist, resolved to make themselves better worth the sacrifice as far as they could. They went home and washed themselves and their children, cleaned up their dirty cabins, and sought to keep their hands and heads honestly busy. The day the land came into their possession was a double jubilee, for it found an eager people ready to improve and enjoy it, and it is not probable that any woman was ever more de-

voutly loved than the woman who did that Christ-like deed in behalf of the poor and the helpless. As they had looked at her creeping along on her crippled limbs, knowing that every step was a pain, the tears had run down their cheeks as they said to one another, "She is doing that for us!"

My friends, I want to point you to Jesus Christ suffering and dying for you, and I want you to remember that he did it for *you*. Come with me out into the garden of Gethsemane. The Last Supper has been taken with his friends. Judas has gone away to sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Christ, with Peter and James and John, has gone out into the garden to seek relief in prayer. As he prays the weight of the world's sin rests upon his shoulders and it seems as though his heart would break. We cannot tell what that awful agony meant. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He comes back to his disciples and finds them sleeping. He returns again to prayer, and an angel comes and communes with him. He goes back to the disciples, and they see a light coming, and hear noises. Soon the great mob following at the feet of the soldiers is on them. Judas has his thirty pieces of silver in his pocket. He comes up to Christ, and gives him a kiss of pretended affection. O, how that kiss must have hurt Jesus. He had loved Judas as he had the rest. He had done

everything he could to save him. But Judas had loved money more than he did his own soul, and now he has not only sold his Lord, he has sold his immortal soul for thirty pieces of silver.

Do you see Jesus as he draws back in pain from that kiss and says, in a tone of infinite pity, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss"?

The soldiers take him and go away with him to the house of the high priest. And while they wait where are the disciples? All are gone but Peter, who, sitting warming himself at the fire of his enemies, is suddenly asked if he was not one of the friends of Jesus. He denied it. Pretty soon another came around and said, "Surely I saw you with him. And Peter denied again. A little later the servant girl, pointing to Peter, said, "This man was with him, too." And Peter went into a rage this time and cursed and swore that he had never seen him.

At this point some strange influence drew Peter about, and he saw that Jesus was looking, and the look on the face of Christ he had never seen on any face before. It was the look of heartbroken, infinite love. And when he looked on that face, and saw the heartbreak in it, everything in him that was angry or proud or self-willed died. He went out into the darkness and sat down and cried like a child. For once and for all that night Peter

repented. O, I would that every sinner here might just now get a look like that from Jesus Christ!

Then there came the trial before Pilate. There he stood, pale but patient, standing there for you. Pilate was hard and unfeeling, but he was a good lawyer and did not like to condemn an innocent man. However, the men who hated Jesus got around among the people and stirred them up against him, so whenever Pilate would say he would let him go they would cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate sends him to Herod. Herod sends him back again. The soldiers crown him with thorns. They press the thorn-wreath down on his tender brow until the blood runs down over his cheeks. My brother, he wore that crown of thorns that you might have a crown of life. Then, at last, when Pilate gives up to the mob, he orders him to be scourged. They strip him down to the waist; they bend his body over a beam with arms outstretched, tying him there so that he cannot escape, no matter how great the agony, then they take a whip of knotted leather, every stroke of which cuts the quivering flesh like a knife, and the cruel soldiers do their awful work. Brother, he bore that for you. It was no accident. Hundreds of years before he came into the world that very thing had been prophesied. When Jesus Christ left his throne on high and came down to earth to give his

life as a ransom he knew that he would take that beating for you. Isaiah had prophesied it, and had said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Then they bring out the big cross, and put it on the shoulders of Jesus; across that poor, bleeding back they lay the rough beam. Can you see him as he staggers out of the judgment hall? His poor body is faint and weak, and he staggers under the cross, and after a few paces he goes down on his knees with a moan. His murderers are alarmed now; they fear he will die at once. They do not want him to die so soon. With fiendish cruelty they wish the agony to be longer continued. So they take the cross and put it on the shoulders of a stranger who happens to be near, looking on. What an honor was his to bear the cross for Jesus!

Now, let us join the procession as it marches on its way up to Mount Calvary. As we draw near we see that there are others there already. Two thieves from the jail have been brought to the place, and one of them is to be crucified on either side of Jesus. The cross is laid down on the ground, and they lay Jesus down along that upright beam. His poor bruised and bleeding back is forced down against it. His arms are outstretched. The man

who is accustomed to doing this sort of thing until it is brutally commonplace to him takes up a big spike and a heavy mallet to drive the nail through the quivering palm of the Son of God. Ah, that was the hand that he put on the heads of little children when he said, "Suffer them to come unto me." That was the hand that he put on the eyes of the blind man and gave him sight. That was the kindly, loving hand that had never done anything but good deeds. But they drove the spike through his hands, and they drove another huge spike through his feet—feet that had always walked in the paths of mercy and of goodness. And now watch while a dozen men take hold of that cross and lift it up to its place, until with a dull and heavy thud the upright piece slips into the hole prepared for it, and there he hangs.

O brother, he hangs there for you and for me. He came for that purpose, to give his life as a ransom. Draw near while the mob hoots, while men wag their heads, while they shout their curses, and then listen. A hush falls over the brutal crowd. He is saying something. A hand is raised here and there. Hush! hush! See what reply he will make. They think they will get a dying man's curse, perhaps. They hope they will get something to turn into ridicule. But in a voice of such marvelous pity and tenderness that wicked as they were not a

man present ever forgot it, they heard the prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." O my brother, he is saying the same thing to-night about you. You would have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground long ago if it had not been that Jesus was still interceding for you.

Wait a moment longer beside that cross. Hard-hearted with sin, one of the thieves dying at his side joins his curses with those of the mob. But the other has heard that prayer and has felt that no mere man could have so prayed for his enemies. He has a flash of the truth. Suddenly he believes that Jesus is what he says he is, and with a great outburst of repentance, a cry for mercy, he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" That prayer had immediate answer. Christ is never too busy about anything else to delay the answer to a sinner's cry for mercy. Forgetting his own agony and pain, he replies, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

And then there is a cry, "It is finished!" and the ransom has been paid. Christ has made it possible for God to be just, and yet the justifier of everyone that will accept mercy through him. My brother, he did all that for you. What have you done for him? Come to him to-night!

XX

A SORROW THAT WORKETH JOY

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—*Luke xv, 10.*

ILLUSTRATING the statement made in the text, Christ has been telling those beautiful stories of the lost sheep and of the lost piece of money. A shepherd had a hundred sheep, and he came home one night and on counting them found but ninety and nine. He closed the door of the corral and went away through the gathering darkness, seeking after the one that was lost. After a while he found it and put it on his shoulder and came home rejoicing. Then he gathered the other shepherds together and called on them to rejoice with him because he had found his sheep which was lost.

A woman had ten pieces of silver and lost one piece, and she searched for it high and low until she found it. Then she, too, called on her friends to rejoice with her, because she had found the piece which was lost. So Jesus says that the angels in heaven regard with infinite interest and love the search that is made for a lost soul, and when a sinner turns back to God, repenting of his sins, all heaven is animated with joy.

SORROW THAT WORKETH JOY 195

There is something very suggestive about this joy in heaven over human achievement. We are not told that the angels rejoice when a man makes a great fortune, or when one achieves vast success in science or in literature or in art. Perhaps that is because our wealth at the greatest seems a most insignificant thing to those who dwell in heaven, and our dabbling in science and in literature and in art must seem a very small matter, the mere amateur work of children, compared to the unfettered intelligence of those who bathe themselves in the sunlight of infinite wisdom. No, there is only one thing on earth which to that world of immortality is worth rejoicing over, and that is when an immortal soul, becoming conscious of his sin, flees from it to Christ, the mighty Saviour, and finds peace and pardon. Then all the angels watching on the heights of heaven rejoice.

Some of you may have read the poem in which Robert Browning has used a little quotation from a ballad taken from *King Lear*—how “Childe Rowland to the Dark Tower Came”—and has pictured through it the last of the knights of a great band who had set out in early youth together on the great venture to find this tower; and he is now found in midlife, weary and heartsick and hopeless and alone, with all his mates gone from him, dead or forsaken, and he himself has lost all thought of

ever coming to the end of his quest and finding his tower; and he is only going on his way because through sheer habit he must, and he has turned into a plain that is ugly and bare, and he seems to have turned on that road by a lie which directed him falsely, he thinks, and still he hardly cares to ask whether it be true or false, the direction he is taking, he has no hope rekindling at the end descried, only wishing at last some end might be. His whole world-wide wandering had made his hope dwindle into a ghost. And now he is like a sick man very near to death, and he has so long suffered on this quest that he wishes he may die. He turns from the bare, ugly plain that is about him to try and cheer himself with the thought of the companions of his youth, and he remembers only that this one was lost in some disgrace, and that one came to grief in this way and another in that, and all are gone.

“Better this present than a past like that;
Back, therefore, to my darkening path again!”

And still the plain worsens, still there is every sign of evil and of unknown sins which have blackened the surface of the earth. He cannot see a sight which does not bring him a thought of cruelty, of pain, of weariness and death, and there are strange beasts that flit by. And suddenly, just as the night darkens, just as he expects the end to come,

he looks up, and, lo! right in his face, all at once there is the place, there is the tower—the very thing he had been searching for his whole life through. “What in the midst lay but the Tower itself!” There it is. He sees it as a shipwrecked man might see the goal of all his desire. How did he miss seeing it before? The whole world is waiting on all the hills around like giants watching to see whether he will be faithful in the quest at the last. At first he thought the world was dark, blind, dumb, and now the whole earth is crying with voices, voices of his old, lost companions behind him which are ringing in his ears. He sees them all, the long-dead companions of his youth, when hope was young, and he pulls and draws himself together for his last act:

“There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew, ‘Childe Rowland to the Dark Tower
came.’ ”

Like that knight making his long pilgrimage, discouraged and defeated, seeking for the Dark Tower that meant to him peace and rest and comfort, so many a man has gone through the world seeking peace for his soul and finding it not. He has sought for it in business, and it has escaped

him. He has sought for it amid the pleasures of the world, and found there only transient joy which died out to leave an aching heart behind. He has sought it in earth's friendships, and death has robbed him of its comfort. On, on he has pressed, the sky ever darker, and with lessening promise for the future, and then, suddenly, out of the dull, monotonous plain of this worldly life, as Childe Rowland came upon his tower, this man comes upon Christ and his promise of salvation and peace, and there is given to him by the Holy Spirit a flash of divine illumination, and he sees that here is the peace, the comfort, the joy that he has been seeking for all these years, and in that quick glance he sees that the angels of heaven are gathered to rejoice over his repentance and his coming to his own. A new song is put into his mouth. As Childe Rowland blew his slug-horn, so this new-made Christian sings his song of thanksgiving and of praise.

Note that it is repentance on the part of the sinner that makes the angels sing. Now, repentance does not mean simply sorrow. It means a turning away from one's sins. Judas was so sorry that he hanged himself, but he did not truly repent. Peter was sorry, and wept, but he repented, and not only never denied his Lord again, but forever afterward was his faithful and open defender. Because repentance stands at the gate of the Chris-

tian life some are tempted to turn away from it as being a hard life. But it is not. Repentance is like the outer wall to keep robbers away from a beautiful garden within. Repent of your sins, seeing that they can only harm and ruin you, and turn from them to Christ, and the minute you are inside the gate the bells will begin to ring for joy and heaven's choir will sing.

A gentleman tells of going to a seaside resort intending to stay for some time. On looking out for lodgings he saw in a window the sign, "Apartments to Let;" but as the house stood in a street with apparently no sea view he thought they would not be suitable. No others could be found, however, and he was forced to return to these. What was his surprise on entering the house to find that what he had seen from the street was the back of the building, and that the windows at the other side commanded a lovely view of sea and beach—just as good a situation as he could have wished. It is like that with salvation. The turning away from sin, the renouncing it, and breaking with evil habits and evil associations—all these things have to do with the beginnings; but when you have given your heart to God and really entered upon the Christian life there are the associations of that life which are good and pure; there is the approval of your own conscience; there is sweet communion with Christ

and the Holy Spirit; there is the outlook upon a life pleasing to God and an immortality filled with infinite satisfaction. There is sorrow for the moment but joy for the eternity.

Now, all this is in perfect harmony with God's dealings with us in everything. Joy comes to us through hard experience and trial in many ways. One Sunday morning, as Rev. Austin L. Park, of Gardiner, Maine, was getting ready for church, a stalwart-looking man who had before been pointed out to him as the most determined and influential infidel of the town was waiting at the door of the parsonage. He abruptly said: "Mr. Park, my wife wants you to come over to our house and pray for our little girl. She is very sick, perhaps dying. Of course you understand that it is my wife's concern, not mine. I do not believe in such things. But to pacify her I came over."

Mr. Park replied, "I will go right over." And abridging his Sunday morning preparations as much as possible, he did so. The little girl appeared to be far gone from fever. The two physicians called in could give no hope. Mr. Park offered prayer that she might recover. After public services the minister went back again to the bedside of the sick child. She was apparently unconscious and near death's door. The same state of affairs continued for two or three days, when

finally the father came to his house with the startling announcement, "Mr. Park, I have got all over my infidelity."

"Got over your infidelity!" exclaimed the minister. "What do you mean? How did that happen?"

"After you went away on that Sunday morning I went into the sick room saying to myself: 'There is not any God, and there is not any such thing as prayer. But I cannot let her go. I cannot live without her,' and so I said, 'Wife, I'll go and try to pray,' and so I went, saying over and over again, 'O God, save my child!' For three days I did this same thing. The first and the second time she was no better. Each time I came back saying to myself, 'There is no God; this is all nonsense.' The third day I knew in my heart that there was a God, and that he was going to raise my darling. I told my wife so. And the little one will recover."

Now it was through this man's prayers for his child and his great sorrow and anxiety on her behalf that he was led to believe in God and to repent of his own sins. It was his necessity which was God's opportunity. When he found the little girl slipping away from his arms the father-heart which was in him cried out to his own heavenly Father.

I call you to-night to the greatest privilege any man or woman on earth can have. You are lost

from God's fold. You have wandered away through sin, and the Good Shepherd is seeking after you. If you hear his voice to-night do not go deeper into the darkness, but come back to him, and make your own heart glad, cause our hearts to rejoice, and set the joy bells in heaven ringing by your return to Christ.

XXI

THE NEW CHILDHOOD

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.—*Mark x, 15.*

IF we are to go to heaven by the way of childhood it behooves us to keep in touch with childhood and know well its characteristics. Childhood's supreme power is in its perfect trust and confidence in the strong friends who surround it. Childhood is weak and helpless, and knows it, but its trust is its strength.

In English cities, and occasionally in America during the last two years, there have been two pictures often placed side by side in shop windows. One of these pictures represents Lord Roberts with a little child on his knee, at Pretoria, in South Africa, saying to a member of his staff who approaches him with some message, "Don't you see I am busy?" The other is that one in which a little child is pictured as crossing a crowded street, and the policeman is holding up his hand to stop the traffic until it gets safely over. It is entitled "His Majesty the Baby."

A gentleman who stood at one of these windows and watched the people as they glanced into it, or

stopped to consider it, says it was a very interesting study. Many of them approached the window with a look of abstraction or with even a frown on the brow, some with a look of sadness and sorrow; but as they went away their faces were lit up by a kindly smile. The pictures seem to be popular with everyone, whether young or old, rich or poor. They touch a tender chord in all hearts.

The little child has always had this majesty and power among good people the world over. The little Moses in his bulrush cradle captivated the royal heart; he mastered the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. It is said that some men are born booted and spurred, to ride; and some are born saddled and bridled, to be ridden. But these distinctions all come out after the years of childhood have passed. The truth is we are all born with boots and spurs and have our time of ruling.

When we inquire into the secret of the child's power, we find that it is in its trust and confidence. It is helpless; it cannot fight for itself; it can only win through faith. Now I am sure that that was one of the things that Christ had in his mind when he uttered our text. We shall never win salvation by our own struggles. We shall never be able to fight our own way out of our sins and into the divine life of peace and forgiveness. Our only hope is to surrender ourselves to Christ in childlike faith

and confidence, and when we do that the gates of the kingdom of heaven will fly open and we shall rest at peace with God.

Childhood is genuine. It has no cynicism, no malice. Sin spurs men and women as they go on in life, and makes them bitter, and takes away the old attitude of gentle, confiding faith toward God. We must get rid of that if we are to have peace with God. The greatest man in the world can only come like a little child to the feet of Jesus Christ and confess his sin and ask for forgiveness. And when we do that the worst sin will give way and be blotted out by his blood.

Mrs. J. K. Barney, whose missionary work in Cuba has been so favorably regarded, tells a most interesting story of a conversion which took place on the Pacific coast in a mining region some years ago. One day Mrs. Barney learned that over the hills from where she was stopping a man so unspeakably vile that no one could stay with him was slowly dying by an incurable illness. This description so moved Mrs. Barney that she called at the little adobe cabin. She found the sick man lying on some straw and colored blankets. Her shadow in the doorway was the signal for him to break forth into frightful oaths. Quietly advancing, however, she placed within his reach some fruit she had brought. Then, retreating to the door, she tried

to reach his heart by speaking of his mother, his wife, and his God; but he cursed each one. Mrs. Barney was greatly discouraged, but the next day she went back again, and she went every day for two weeks. He did not show the least gratitude. At the end of that time she said, "I am not going any more."

That night, when she was putting her little boys to bed, she did not pray for the miner as she had been accustomed to do. Her little Charlie noticed it, and said, "Mamma, you do not pray for the bad man."

"No," she answered, with a sigh.

"Have you given him up, mamma?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Has God given him up, mamma? Ought you to give him up before God does?"

That night she could not sleep for thinking of the man, dying, and so vile that no one cared. She got up and went away by herself to pray. She learned that night what she had never known before, what it was to travail for a human soul. She saw her Lord as she had never seen him before. She stayed there until the answer came.

The next day, the moment her little boys went off to school, she left her work, and hurried over the hills, not to see "that vile wretch," but to win a soul. She thought the man might die. There was a

human soul in the balance, and she wanted to get there quickly. As she passed on a neighbor came out of her cabin, saying, "I'll go over the hills with you, I guess."

Mrs. Barney was in a hurry, and did not want her very much, so absorbed was she in her own thoughts; but she learned that day that God could plan better than she could. The neighbor had her little girl with her, and as they reached the cabin she said, "I'll wait out here, and you hurry, won't you?"

The wicked miner met her as usual with an oath, but it did not hurt as it had before. While she was tidying up his room and getting him some fresh water the clear laugh of the little girl rang out upon the air like a bird note. "What's that?" asked the man, eagerly.

"It's a little girl outside who is waiting for me."

"Would you mind letting her come in?" said he, in a different tone from any she had heard before.

The child was very sweet, her face framed in golden curls, and her eyes tender and pitiful. In her hands she held the flowers she had picked on the way over the hills, and bending toward him she said: "I am sorry for you, sick man. Won't you have a posy?"

He laid his great bony hand beyond the flowers

on the plump hand of the child, and the great tears came into his eyes as he said: "I had a little girl once, and she died. Her name was Mamie. She cared for me. Nobody else did. Guess I'd been different if she'd lived. I've hated everybody since she died."

Mrs. Barney then had the key to the man's heart. She watched the man's face before her, and she saw that memory was busy with scenes that were long since gone, and that the agony of remorse was torturing him. At last he exclaimed to her, "What's that, woman, you said the other day about talking to somebody out of sight?"

"It's praying. I tell God what I want."

"Pray now. Pray quick. Tell him I want my little girl again. Tell him anything you want to."

Mrs. Barney took the hands of the child and placed them on the trembling hands of the man. Then, dropping on her knees, with the child in front of her, she told the little girl to pray for the man who had lost his little Mamie and wanted to see her again. And the sweet little child prayed: "Dear Jesus, this man is sick. He has lost his little girl, and he feels bad about it. I am so sorry for him, and he's so sorry, too. Won't you help him, and show him where to find his little girl? Do, please. Amen."

The little girl slipped away soon, but the man kept saying, "Tell him more about it. Tell him everything."

There were no more oaths after that, but, led by the little child's hand, and piloted by her sweet and simple little prayers, the miner took hold upon the Strong Hands, and as he said in his own language "staked all" on "the Man that died for me."

Mrs. Barney was not with him when he died, but one of the rude mountain men who was with him said to her, "I wish you could have seen him when he went."

"Tell me about it," she answered.

"Well, all at once he brightened up about midnight, and smiling said, 'I am going, boys. Tell her I am going to see Mamie. Tell her I am going to see the Man that died for me.' And he was gone."

That poor, wretched miner lost all his cynicism, all his bitterness, all his oaths, all his hatred when he got back to childhood again. He found the child's faith that received the story of Jesus naturally and simply and trusted it implicitly. You may have salvation on those terms to-night. It is not a matter to speculate about. It is not a matter to theorize over. It is not a matter for argument. It is a matter to test by personal experience. Obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest your faith on him,

and you shall know for yourself "the peace that passeth all understanding."

But the thing I wish most to press home upon your hearts is that you obey Christ, and obey him now. Give yourself something that will guide you from this hour on a straight path for heaven.

Two men were out hunting, and were overtaken by a dense mist. One of the men, who knew the country well, said he would bring them out straight to the point they wanted, knowing the part of the stream at which they stood and the direction in which they wanted to go. For a while they went on safely enough; then one stopped and turned to button his waterproof. The guide turned for a moment to speak to him. Then instantly he cried: "I have lost my bearings. That turn did it. I don't know the way any longer." They went on, thinking they were right, but an hour later found themselves back in the same place. They had gone in a complete circle. "Now," said the guide, "we can start again; but we must not stop for anything." Away they went, and he led them right across to the point he wanted. Later he explained to his friend that, knowing the direction at the outset, he kept his eye on a certain tree or rock straight before him, and so led in a fairly straight line, knowing that if he lost that he was sure to go in a circle.

Now, my dear friend, our safety lies in the same thing. Some of you have gone on for years, expecting all the while to become Christians and make your way from earth to heaven; but you have made no headway. You have gone round and round in a circle, getting farther away from God and from righteousness. Not only that, but you have lost years in which you might have been growing into a strong and happy Christian. Do not waste any more time. With childlike simplicity and faith obey the Lord Jesus to-night. Confess him openly and set your eyes upon him. Take Paul's great words, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

XXII

THE LUST FOR THINGS

A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.—*Luke xii, 15.*

OUR theme is very evident: Things do not make the man. Many a man has brilliant and beautiful things and is in himself, in his real personality, common and vulgar and even loathsome. On the other hand, it is true that many men and women who have a very small supply of things—nothing, indeed, to attract the eye of the multitude—are yet in themselves brilliant and glorious. Christ was so poor he had not where to lay his head; yet the bright, brainy men of all the centuries since have rejoiced and marveled as they have studied into his personality. The rich men of his day who owned the broad fields and the great flocks and the long purses—who knows anything about them now? Their names have gone to the bats of oblivion eighteen centuries ago.

The whole world knows John Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, who spent many years in jail and who was always poverty-stricken, and the millions bless him. Yet there is probably not a man on earth that could give you the names of the richest men in

London, or any one of them, during the years when Bunyan was writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* in Bedford jail.

One may have things until they form a desert in which the man starves to death and yet have no real value in his own personality. Indeed, one may be captured and destroyed by the very material success which he has achieved. Dr. Alexander McLaren says that there is many a rich man whom the shouts of the stock exchange declare to be wonderfully successful who from the highest point of view, the only true point of view, is a dead failure. He has gained all that he desires, but instead of conquering the world, the world has conquered him. It has not helped him to know God, neither has it helped him to be a man. His success has turned him into a money-bag and hid from him the face of God. People say of him that he is successful, that he has had a victorious life; but his victory is like that of the soldier who was out on the picket line. He shouted in to his companions in camp, saying, "I have taken a prisoner." But as he did not come in the officer shouted back to him, "Bring your prisoner along." And the answer was, "He won't come!" Then came another command, "Then come in without him." To which there came back the reply, "He won't let me." That is the kind of victory over the world, the kind of success, that a great

many people are winning. They are said to be successful, but in truth they have been captured and are held in bondage. The noble visions of life which they had in the early years of youth have been lost in the fight for success. Though they now have many things they have lost their souls. Better a thousand times to fail in business ambitions than to fail to be a man. No man is so terribly cheated as he who trades off his manhood, his honor, his love for God, his title to heaven, for a few paltry things that he may call his own only for a little while here on earth. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." The great prize of life is the prize of a pure soul, cleansed and redeemed by the blood of Christ. And if a man misses that, and comes to the end at last a mere grubber after things, he has been horribly cheated.

Now I want you to ask yourself the question where your chief interest lies, as expressed by your daily living and conversation. Is your attention largely and with great preponderance given to the things of this world, or is your chief attention and thought centered upon the far greater object of living a true Christian life and developing a personality that shall so please God that it shall shine forth redeemed and glorified at the judgment day? Where is the emphasis laid in your life—on the worldly things which surround you or upon the

graces of the soul? Everything depends on the emphasis. That shows where your heart is.

On one occasion Ole Bull, the great violinist, was a passenger on the *City of Chester* crossing the Atlantic. Among other notable passengers were Chief Justice Waite and Professor Anderson, afterward minister to Denmark. The passengers undertook to get up a concert, but Ole Bull declined to take part. All were deeply disappointed, and at this crisis Professor Anderson came to the rescue.

"There is one way, and one only," he said, "in which our man may be caught. A fund is being raised at present to erect a statue to Leif Ericsson, the Norseman, at Madison, Wisconsin. Ole Bull is intensely patriotic, and if we made a written statement to him that the proceeds of the concert were to be contributed to do this honor to his immortal fellow-countryman, I am sure he would consent to play."

The suggestion was greeted with applause, and Chief Justice Waite prepared the memorial, which was a most ingenious and elaborate document. Duly signed by all the passengers, it was presented to Ole Bull, and when he saw the purport of the paper his face lighted up with pleasure, and he declared immediately that he would play.

He was as good as his word, and played in wonderful form and spirit. He responded to encore

after encore, until at last the captain, who was a most enthusiastic Englishman, rose in the audience and asked him to play "God Save the Queen."

Now, Ole Bull was a violent Republican, and had but little respect for monarchical institutions of any kind. However, he bowed courteously, and whispered to Professor Anderson: "You heard me promise to play 'God Save the Queen.' Now wait till I come to that." Finally it was reached, and, true to his promise, he gave the British anthem, but in a dull and lifeless way, without spirit or color. Instantly, upon its conclusion, he swept into the stirring strains of "Hail, Columbia," and played with magnificent dash and fire. Then, with no stop, he passed to the Norwegian "Hymn of Liberty," a most thrillingly patriotic composition. Then, as he finished, he caught his friend's eye, and smiled. He had buried "God Save the Queen" so deep that nobody remembered that it had been played.

My friend, is not that a clear illustration of the way you have dealt with the spiritual strains of your childhood and youth? You were taught to pray at your mother's knee. You were told the story of Christ by loving lips that it may be are now forever silent on earth. You had visions of a Christian life and a Christian character that should grow splendid and glorious as the years went on.

But as the years have passed you have buried all these holy visions, all these sacred hopes and promises of youth, deep down under the muck and dirt of the things of this world—buried them so deep that you seldom ever think of them any more. O, I pray God that the Holy Spirit may resurrect them and make them appeal to you again at this hour, that you may be aroused to the vast importance of the salvation of your soul. Multitudes of men and women in this city who have abundance of this world's goods would be far richer in all true wealth if they could be stripped of houses and lands and stocks and money and left without a dollar, if they could be left free from their sins, clean-hearted, with faith in God, to start anew.

Some years ago, one cold Sunday morning, a young man crawled out of a market house in Philadelphia into the chilly air just as the bells began to ring for church. He had slept under a stall all night; or, rather, had lain there in a stupor from a debauch. His face, which had once been delicate and refined, was blue from cold and blotched with sores. His clothes were of a fine texture, but they hung about him in rags, covered with mud. He staggered, faint with hunger and exhaustion; the snowy streets, the gayly dressed crowds thronging to the churches, swam before his eyes; his brain was dazed for want of his usual stimulants. He

gasped with a horrid, sick thirst, a mad craving for liquor, which the sober man cannot imagine. He looked down at the ragged coat flapping about him, and then at his brimless hat, to find something he could pawn for whisky, but had nothing. Then he dropped upon a stone step leading, as it happened, into a church.

Some elegantly dressed women, seeing the wretched sot, drew their garments closer, and hurried by on the other side. One elderly woman turned to look at him just as two young men of his own age halted.

"That is George C——," said one. "Five years ago he was a promising lawyer. His mother and sisters think he is dead."

"What did it?"

"A fashionable set first, then brandy."

"You have not had breakfast yet, my friend," said one of them. "Come, let us go together and find some."

The young man drew the arm of the poor sot through his own, and hurried him, trembling and resisting, down the street to a little hall where a table was set with strong coffee and a hot, savory meal. It was surrounded with men and women as wretched as himself.

He ate and drank ravenously.

When he had finished his eye was almost clear and

his step was steady. As he came up to his new friend he said: "Thanks! You have helped me."

"Let me help you farther. Sit down and listen to some music."

Somebody touched a few plaintive notes on the organ and a hymn was sung, one of the old simple strains which mothers sing to their children and bring themselves nearer to God. The tears stood in the eyes of the drunken lawyer. He listened while a few of the words of Jesus were read. Then he rose to go.

"I was once a man like you," he said, holding out his hand. "I believe in Christ; but it is too late now."

"It is not too late," cried his friend.

Then and afterward that Christian young man stuck faithfully to him until he won him to an open acceptance of Christ and salvation. And steadily from that day he began to rise. Through Christ he got victory over his appetite and his evil habits, and he built up under God's grace a manly character that all the world honored. He was a richer man in every true sense the morning he gave himself to Christ, with all the wreckage behind him, than he was when the world called him successful but while he himself was given over to the greed and sensual pleasure that finally ruined him even for this world.

My message this evening ought certainly to have in it a most earnest exhortation to accept Jesus Christ as the true wealth of the soul. Paul says that if we give our hearts to Christ we become heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Respond to-night to the knocking of Christ on the door of your heart, and open the door to him, and there shall be begun in your heart the development of spiritual riches that can never be taken away from you. No loss of property, no loss of health, no loss of friends can take away from you the charm and the beauty and the happiness of the spiritual graces which Christ can cause to grow in your heart. And when Death, the grim tax-gatherer, shall come—he who takes away all the gold and all the title deeds and leaves the millionaire to go into his coffin as poor as the pauper—he will have no power to rob you of the riches of faith and hope and love which Christ has bestowed upon you. When worldly men are yielding up their title deeds with a sigh of despair you with a thrill of infinite delight will be coming into yours and will be rejoicing that you have “a title clear” to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for you. The time to make sure of that title is now. “Now is the accepted time.”

XXIII

NEAR YET OUTSIDE

Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.—*Mark* xii, 34.

THE occasion of the utterance of these words by our Saviour was a conversation which he had with some men known as “the scribes,” who were very critical of him and who were ever seeking to confuse him and to put him in the wrong. One of these men who had come in after the conversation had started was of a better type than the others, and as the world judges men was a very good kind of a man. He had some very good ideas about religion, yet he lacked the one essential thing, the surrender of his heart in devotion to God. He knew the creed of religion well. After he had listened to the conversation for a time, and had greatly admired the answers which Christ gave, he himself put in an inquiry. “Which,” asked he of Christ, “is the first commandment of all?”

Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the

first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

To this the scribe replied, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God; and there in none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Jesus then made the remark of our text: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Yet he was not in the kingdom. He knew enough to be saved, and yet might never be saved. And there are multitudes to-day who are living in the same situation. They are not far from the kingdom, they know the way to the kingdom, and yet they stay out. I know of nothing sadder. Knowledge is given us to act upon, and to have the knowledge of any important truth which has relation to our own duty and not to act upon it cannot help but injure us. No man can know his duty and fail to do it and be as good a man afterward as he was before. Every truth carries its obligation with it. If we do not obey the truth which comes to us, then we are morally degenerated by it. Christ said to the scribes and Pharisees of his time that the pub-

licans and harlots, wicked as they were, had a better chance for salvation than the more moral people, because they had not had the truth presented to their minds and impressed upon their consciences time and again and yet had hardened their hearts and refused to act on the wisdom God had given them. I have often noticed that when a man has been strongly impressed with the duty of becoming a Christian, and has had the matter earnestly and persistently placed before him, so that he has recognized the duty of confessing Christ and has seemed at the very door and in the very act of entering into the kingdom, if he failed to enter he almost inevitably drifted farther than ever away from God.

Mr. Spurgeon said it was his experience that among the people whom he knew those who afterward turned out to be the most determined enemies of the Gospel were those whom he had seen so near conversion that it was impossible to see how they avoided it. Such persons seem ever after to take vengeance upon the holy influence which had almost proved too much for them. Hence our fear for persons under gracious impression; for if they do not now decide for God they will become the more desperate in sin. That which is set in the sun if it be not softened will be hardened. I remember well a man who under the influence of an earnest revivalist was brought to his knees to cry for mercy

in the presence of his wife and others. But, refusing to make a public confession of Christ in the church, he drifted entirely from Christian influence, and never afterward would he enter a place of worship or pay any attention to religious conversation. That man had been on the very threshold of the gate of the kingdom, and yet he turned away to be lost forever.

A Welsh minister says the saddest thing he ever had to do in his life was to go and see the family of a man lost in a wreck almost at his own door. A sailing vessel, the *Royal Charter*, after safely circumnavigating the globe went to pieces in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, and it was his melancholy duty to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown, and the lady was sitting in the parlor expecting her husband, after his long voyage, with the table spread for his evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her that he was drowned. "Never can I forget the grief," said the pastor, "so stricken and tearless, with which she wrung my hand, as she said, 'So near home, and yet lost!'" That seemed the most terrible of sorrows. And yet how insignificant is that sorrow to the anguish which must wring the soul which is compelled to say at last, "Once I was at the very gate of heaven, and had

almost entered in; but failing to enter I am lost, and lost forever!"

There are some moments of life that are infinitely critical on all our after life. There are vision hours that come to us, and they often come in meetings like this. Men see their sins in a different light than they see them at other times, and they see Christ as they do not see him at other times. At such a time it is easy to be saved, and to neglect is the suicide of the soul.

Henry Ward Beecher once said that when such luminous hours come a man should reflect that while the mercy of God may call many times it is very likely he will never have another call so powerful, and if a man in such an hour, when the Spirit speaks to his soul, when his conscience is aroused, when everything urges him forward toward a nobler and a better life, will ratify his impulse to go forward, even though at first he stagger on the journey, he will find his way into the kingdom of God; but if he waits, even a few hours may submerge all these gracious influences and sweep him far away into the darkness. The element of time-liness enters with great significance into human life. Some years ago all the civilized world sent out men to take an observation of the transit of Venus, and when the conjunction came it was indispensably necessary to the success of the undertaking that the

very first contact should be observed. An astronomer who had devoted six months to preparation, and had gone out to take this observation, ate a heavy dinner, and, taking copious draughts of liquid to wash it down, lay down, saying, "Call me at the proper time," and went to sleep. By and by he was awakened and was told, "The planet approaches." Half conscious, he turned over and said, "Yes, yes, yes, I will attend to it, but I must finish my nap first;" and before he was aware of it the greatest opportunity in his whole scientific career had passed away, and he had thrown away the pains of months of preparation. It was important that he should be on hand to take the observation on the second, and failing in that he failed forever.

But, my dear friend, you are interested in a heavenly observation infinitely more important than that which the astronomer lost. God has given you this great opportunity to find the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ; the Christian people are praying; many others have found salvation; the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart; your conscience has been awakened; you are not far from the kingdom of God. It is only a step to Christ. It is only, Look and be saved. And yet you may turn away from all this and be lost. God forbid!

It is so easy to be saved that it seems a terrible thing when men and women who know their duty and see the opportunity fail of it. Not long ago a noble Christian woman who is always on the alert for an opportunity to point somebody to Christ got on the train in Boston, and on entering the car found only one vacant seat at the extreme end. As she sat down she observed directly opposite an old woman in shabby attire and with a most unhappy look upon her face. On her head she had an old shawl, which with some difficulty she was holding in place with her thumb and fingers. The good woman watching her took from her bag a glass-headed pin, and with a smile passed it to the evidently sad-hearted woman opposite. As the woman clutched the pin the brakeman called out her station, and she rose to go.

Placing her hands upon the shoulders of the lady, the sad-faced woman said, "I needed the pin awfully, but I thank you for the smile."

There was but a moment left. Desiring to acquaint the woman with the love of the heavenly Father, the lady bent over toward her and said, gently and tenderly: "Do you know God? You don't look very happy. But I want you to know that he cares."

The brakeman called again the name of the station; the train had stopped; and in haste, and with

the shawl over her head, the sad woman passed out.

When the lady reached home she told her mother, as her custom was, of the experience she had had; and her mother made a note of it in a little book in which she wrote the names of those in whom her daughter had for any reason become interested. Not knowing the name of the stranger, for want of a better title she wrote her down as "the woman and the pin."

A few weeks after this the lady was passing through the railroad station when she felt something pull convulsively at her arm. Turning about, she was surprised to see the same old woman; but the sadness was gone and there was a bright and happy expression upon her face as she said, "I'm in an awful hurry, and I know you be; but I thought I'd just like to tell you that I know God now."

How little light the old woman had compared to that which has shone upon you, and yet she had enough to find her way into the kingdom.

I do not suppose there is a single person here this evening who would admit for a moment, to anyone else or to themselves, that they expect to remain all their lives outside of the kingdom of God. You fully expect some time to accept Christ's offer to be your Saviour. And the great cry of my heart

to-night is, to urge you not to presume on the mercy of God, and thus put your immortal soul in peril through delay.

An evangelist who had been holding meetings in a Southern city returning to the same city after an absence and stopping over between trains, was told that there was dying in the hospital a man who had been deeply impressed in his meeting but who was without hope. He went to see the man and pleaded with him to be a Christian, without avail. The time came for his train to leave, and the man was still unsaved. He said to him, "I will pray with you for the last few minutes. If you will accept Christ just press my hand." But there came no pressure, and as he was leaving the dying man he said to him, "Tell me when you will come," and he answered, "I think I will come to-morrow." Before the evangelist reached the end of his journey a telegram followed him saying that the man was dead. To-morrow for him never came on earth. He had been at the very door of the kingdom of heaven, and had looked in, and yet failed to enter. Make sure of your salvation here and now!

XXIV

THE TRUE TEST OF LOVE

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.—*John xv, 10.*

CHRIST sets up here, as the true test of love toward him, that we shall keep his commandments. Obedience is always the supreme test of love toward one greater than and superior to ourselves. The test of love on the part of the strong is that they bear the burdens of the weak and use their power to protect and save. The test of love on the part of the weak toward the great is that they shall show reverent obedience. When we come to our relation to God this thought is brought to its perfection. Christ put aside the glory of heaven and gave himself to ransom us from our sins and make possible our salvation, and he calls upon us in turn to give to him our obedience, not grudgingly, but lovingly and with whole-hearted affection. He died for us, and he asks us to live for him.

There is nothing unnatural or foreign to our human nature in this desire of Christ's. Love is the greatest power in the world to control and

master us and cause us to do heroic things that we may serve the one who has the right to our protection and defense.

I recall one of the most thrilling experiences of my own life, which occurred some years ago on the top of a mountain in Idaho. A party of us had gone out from Boise' City, some thirty miles or more, starting very early in the morning, and had had our breakfast at the foot of the mountain. The ladies of the party and one of the gentlemen remained about the camp, while a friend and myself were bent on a hunting expedition for prairie chickens and sage hens. It was a hot day, and at noon we found ourselves well up the mountain, several miles from camp, and suffering very much for water. I had been in the same part of the country in the spring, and knew that there was a lake about a mile and a half farther up the mountain, and remembered also that an old herder had told me that it would be a good place for ducks. So we pressed on up the mountain, and were soon refreshing ourselves in the shade of a big thorn tree which stood above a beautiful spring of cold water that emptied into the lake. As soon as we had rested we began to look about for the ducks, and started up several splendid flocks. We shot a number of the birds, which fell into the water, some not far from the shore, but several of them out in

the middle of the lake two hundred yards away. The dog we had with us, which we used in hunting for prairie chickens, was not accustomed to the water, and would not retrieve the birds. My friend could not swim, so I swam out after some of the birds nearest the shore and brought them in; and gaining courage with the exercise I determined to secure those in the middle of the lake. I am a strong swimmer and could easily have done it but for the fact that as I drew near the center I found a large mass of fine, slender, vinelike rushes which grew up from the bottom of the lake nearly to the top of the water. These would wind themselves around my limbs, not only impeding me but tending to drag me down. I did not think much of it at first, but after I had gathered up the ducks and started to return I began to feel their influence more and more. Unfortunately I chose the nearest way toward the shore, which proved to be the side where the weeds grew thickest and extended nearly across the lake. I became more and more exhausted, and finally shouted to my friend that I must surely sink. It was a terrible situation for him, for he could not swim a stroke, and there was neither pole nor plank nor anything within reach for him to help me with. He ran in as far as he could wade, but that was only a few yards, as the deep water ran up close to the shore. I had

dropped the ducks, of course, and had no thought of anything except saving my life.

At last it seemed as though I could struggle no more. In my weariness and exhaustion my imagination pictured the snakelike weeds which were tugging at my limbs to be demon fingers drawing me under to my death. But just as I was giving up all effort, and in a moment more should have gone to the bottom, there came up before me a picture of my young wife at the camp, all unconscious of danger or sorrow. In a flash I saw my friend going back over the road we had come to tell her that I was drowned in that mountain lake. As this came to me a new courage for resistance was born in me, and I cried, "I must reach shore. For her sake I must not give up, and I will not!"

I have often recalled that incident since then, when I have seen a man who was swimming his best against odds, trying to keep his head above water, when the temptations that were drawing him down were fierce and terrible; and when it was thought that he was gone, I have seen him strike out again with new vigor for the sake of some one that was dear to him.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has given you the greatest possible pledge of love in his death upon the cross. He has died for you, and he asks you to live for him. Sin is pulling you downward.

Those snakelike vines that twined themselves about me in that mountain lake are but a faint illustration of the demon fingers of appetite and passion and lust that tug away at the hearts of men and women and pull them down to their ruin. Christ calls to you in the midst of your struggle against odds and offers you a help that my friend could not give me. You have but to reach out your hand to Christ and he will take it and bring you safe to land. Will you not give Christ that test of love and obey him to-night?

We do not treat any other friend who has been good and kind with such ingratitude as we treat Christ when we fail to confess him and give him our service. If anyone has rendered us a great service we lose no opportunity to show that we remember it tenderly. But Christ did more for you than anyone ever did, and yet some of you have never done anything to show that you appreciate his love and his sacrifice.

My good Quaker friend, Rev. J. Walter Malone, of Cleveland, Ohio, was once on his way home from Boston, and had reached the point where the Boston and Albany train comes down on the western side of the Berkshire Hills. The train was delayed for a little, and he stepped out on the bank with a look of thoughtfulness on his face, seeking until he found a very beautiful wild flower. He plucked

it carefully, and bought it with him into the train.

The train sped on its way toward Albany, and my friend returned to his book; but ever and anon an observer would have seen him turn from the page he was reading to glance with a sort of caressing look at the little wild flower which he had plucked from the Berkshire hillside. Albany was reached, and on up the New York Central toward Buffalo rushed the car carrying our friend. Finally he laid his book aside, and seemed to be watching very carefully the country through which the train was passing, as if looking for some remembered landmark. Suddenly a glance of recognition flashed in his eyes and glowed upon his face, and, raising with one hand the window next to which he was sitting, he lifted to his lips the other with the little wild flower, and then he leaned far out the window until what seemed to be to him the exact place had been reached, when the little flower was loosened from his fingers and floated off to its resting place beside the track. When Mr. Malone drew back from the window into his seat the passengers across the aisle of the car saw that his face was wet with tears, and wondered what the little flower and the sudden tears could mean.

This is what they meant: Some years before a train coming down the New York Central ran into

a landslide and was wrecked. The engineer was pinned under his engine, fatally hurt. When some of the passengers ran to him to see whether they could do anything for him they saw that the death agony was already on his brow. But, forgetting himself, the faithful engineer with his last dying breath exclaimed, "Flag the oncoming train! Flag the oncoming train!" With that he fell back and died. My friend Malone was a passenger in that oncoming train. He had gathered his wild flower to drop as nearly as he could at the spot where the engineer's thoughtfulness and fidelity had saved his life. And he told me that he never passed that spot without wet eyes and a flower to drop in memory of the man who, when he was dying, was so faithful to the interests of the passengers he never saw that he gave the last breath of his life to save them.

Now that all seems natural to us. You say in your heart, "Mr. Malone feels just right about that engineer, and it would be very ungrateful if he should pass that spot dry-eyed and with indifference." But O, my friend, you that have not yet confessed Christ, what condemnation do you put on yourself when you say that! Jesus Christ gave his own blood on the cross for your salvation, but how many times have you been in the church when the communion service has been celebrated, and your

friends and your neighbors have gone to that communion and taken the bread and the wine as emblems of the broken body and the shed blood of your Saviour, and you have never gone. Yet he explicitly asks you to do this. He has asked that you do this in remembrance of him. And you have always refused to do it. Surely your heart must condemn you, and every noble impulse of your soul must rise up in judgment upon you for such ingratitude.

I continue to urge upon you that when you consider what Christ has done for you, that he has given himself for your salvation, there is nothing unnatural in his asking you for an open confession, and that you should let all the world know that you love and serve him.

A man employed at the docks in one of the seaboard cities fell into the water, and was with great difficulty rescued by a fellow-workman. In the evening, a woman with two little children approached the rescuer saying, "Are you the man that saved my husband?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, these two little boys want to kiss the man that saved their father."

The workman wiped his face with his sleeve, and stooped down while the children kissed him.

Then the woman, with the great tears in her

eyes, said, "And I—I—feel—that—I—I—would like to kiss him too."

"And so ye shall, my lass," and, with an extra wipe of his face that lingered on his own wet eyes, the man leaned toward the wife, who imprinted on his manly cheek a holy, matronly kiss which told of her gratitude and love.

Now, it does not seem unnatural to us that a loving woman, overflowing with gratitude for the saving of her husband and the father of her sons, should have felt and acted like that. But how strange it is that one who is responsive to gratitude in every other relation can let the years go on and fail to show gratitude and love to Him who merits it more than anyone else. Give Christ your heart to-night. Confess him and obey him, and you shall abide in his love. Day by day his love shall shine about you and warm your heart and give you peace.

XXV

PLUCKING OUT AND CUTTING OFF

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.—*Matthew* v, 29, 30.

THE simple, straightforward teaching of these strong sentences uttered by our Lord is very plain. The great end of life is to have the right of way with any sensible, honest Christian man or woman. We are not to allow anything to interfere with straightforward Christian character and conduct. The great thing is to honor God and to live in fellowship with and obedient to Jesus Christ. First of all, we must be Christian—definitely, genuinely, consciously Christian. Nothing must interfere with that, and the moment anything does interfere with it, that moment it must be banished. No one can doubt that that is the teaching of this passage. These are the words of Jesus and are of the first importance to us.

The first thought suggested to me is that the Christian is to live a life peculiarly set apart as the disciple of Jesus. We ought not to object to this.

We ought to be glad to have some peculiarities by which the world will know us as Christians. We are to be a "peculiar people, zealous of good works." And we should live our Christianity with such earnestness and such reverence for what will please Christ that it will be noticeable in us, and no one among all our acquaintances will ever for a moment forget that we are Christians. We may be other things, and shall be—merchants and doctors and lawyers and clerks and students, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers and children, neighbors and friends. We shall have various relations in society and in business. But people who think of us ought to think the most prominent feature of our character is that we are devout friends of Christ. Having given Christ our hearts and consecrated our lives to him, we ought never to allow ourselves to do anything that will in any way tarnish or soil our personality as Christians.

No doubt some of you remember Schiller's ballad of "The Count of Hapsburg." The count was hunting the antelope, and was in the midst of the excitement of the wild chase, when he heard the sound which told him that the last sacrament was being carried to the dying:

"He heard in the distance a bell twinkling clear,
And a priest with the host, he saw, soon drawing near."

And as the priest passed along his way, the count

saw that a brook, swollen by the mountain torrents created by a great storm, barred his steps. Instantly dismounting from his horse, the count placed the priest with his sacred burden on the saddle, and thus enabled him to ride in safety over the stream and take "provision for the way" to the dying man.

"Then the count made him mount his stately steed,
And the reins to his hands he confided;
That he duly might comfort the sick in his need,
And that each holy rite be provided."

On the following morning, when the priest brought the horse back to the count, with his thanks, the count refused to take for common use what had borne a burden so holy, and devoted the horse as a gift to the service of God in the monastery:

"'God forbid that in chase or in battle,' then cried
The count in humility lowly,
'The steed I henceforth should dare to bestride,
That hath borne my Creator so holy.
And if as a guerdon he may not be thine,
He devoted shall be to the service divine.'"

I think we may find a suggestion in the story given us in Schiller's song. Having given our bodies to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, having crowned Christ Lord over all in our hearts, having set ourselves apart to wear the colors of Jesus Christ and to be known as his servants and friends,

we ought not to allow anything in our daily living to hinder us from the highest Christian life.

Our greatest danger often comes to us when sin assumes attractive forms. Dr. David Gregg has well said: Sin as a caterpillar is bad enough, but sin as a butterfly is ever a thousand times worse. On every wing there is a picture as varied as the rainbow. Every wing is iridescent with different lights that shift and change. The poets call the butterfly "a flying and flashing gem," and a "flower of paradise," and things like that. But the butterfly is only a caterpillar beautified with wings. It is only a painted worm, decked in a velvet suit, and adorned with sparkling gems. If sin in its grossest form be thus dangerous, what must be the unmeasured power of sin when it puts on the robes of beauty? Let me remind you of the power of sin to make itself attractive, and of the power of error to deck itself in robes that resemble the robes of truth, so that the truest souls are in danger of being deceived.

It is certainly important that we should not allow even beautiful things, and things that are good in themselves, to become harmful to us by hindering us from doing our duty as Christians. A thing does not have to be bad in order to be dangerous for us if it step between us and the work which God has given us to do. A story is told of Rev. Rich-

ard Cecil, that when he went to Cambridge he made a resolution restricting himself to a quarter of an hour daily in playing the violin, on which instrument he greatly excelled, and of which he was extravagantly fond; but, on finding it impracticable to adhere to his determination, he cut the strings and never afterward replaced them during his entire term. He did not cut the strings of his violin because he thought violin music was bad, but because he thought his education was better and far more important, and, sweet as the violin music was to his ear, he would not have his manhood harmed and his career fail of its highest possibility even through so sweet a tempter as his violin.

This same noble man had at first studied to be a painter, and retained through life a fondness and taste for the art; but when he became a Christian and felt called of God to be a minister of the Gospel he gave himself with all his soul to that work. He was once called to visit a sick woman in whose bedroom there was a painting which so strongly attracted his notice that he found his attention absorbed by it and diverted from the woman. From that moment he formed a resolution of mortifying a taste which he found so intrusive and so obstructive to him in his nobler pursuits, and determined never again to frequent art exhibitions. You may say that that was an extravagant act;

but, after all, was it not perfectly consistent? The work which God had given him was to him the dearest thing in the world. To do his whole duty as a minister of Christ was the supreme thing, and he was not willing that even so beautiful a thing as the love of art should interfere with the single-eyed devotion which he owed the Lord Jesus.

But if we are wise to cut off pure things if they interfere with the genuine Christian life on our part, how much more evidently wise to cut off those things which are impure and degrading in themselves.

An early missionary in Samoa says that when he labored at Tutuila he often felt rebuked by the strange conduct of a large species of land crab called there the *mali'o*. It bores deep into the soil, the holes sometimes extending a considerable distance. At night this crab loves to make its way to the sea for the purpose of laving itself in the salt water and drinking it. Now, it sometimes happens that, when hurrying through the tall grass and fern, some of its legs become defiled by contact with filth. So great is the vexation of this crab at its mishap that it delays its march to the sea in order to wrench off the offending legs! One may sometimes meet a mutilated individual hobbling along minus two or three of its legs—a self-inflicted punishment. In some rare instances it has been

known to wrench off all its eight legs to escape defilement. It is then content to drag itself over the ground with considerable difficulty by means of its nippers, until it reaches its hole, where it hides until the legs partially develop themselves again, though not to their original length and beauty. "Were we," said the missionary, "as willing to part with our favorite sins as this *mali'o* crab is with its defiled limbs, there would be no doubt of our reaching heaven! This is what our Lord means by our cutting off our right hand and casting it from us."

My dear friends, I press home this solemn message upon your hearts and consciences. I am not asking you what your neighbors think about you or about your life. I am asking you what you think of yourself in the light of God's word and in the light of the Holy Spirit's testimony in your own conscience. Do you personally know of anything which you are doing that you honestly believe to be contrary to the will of God? If so, I beg of you, at whatever the cost, however it may mar or maim your worldly pleasure, to cut that thing off, though it be dear as a right hand; to pluck it out, though it be tender as a right eye. Better to maim your worldly pleasures for a few years than to dwarf and despoil your soul throughout all eternity. That is not my argument nor

my logic, but the argument of Jesus Christ, your Saviour.

Look at it on the other side. Remember, I am not asking what anybody else thinks. I am bringing it home to your own heart. Is there any duty which you are leaving undone? Is there work for which you are fitted and which would help on God's cause that you are refusing to do? Are there unconverted neighbors and friends about whom the Holy Spirit has said to you, "You ought to win that man or that woman to Christ"—and yet you do not do it? If this is true, and you stand guilty before the bar of your own conscience, as tenderly but faithfully I press the matter home upon you, then I beg of you to cleanse yourself from this failure to do your duty. Cast out the pride, or the self-love, or the idleness, or the indifference that has kept you from doing your whole duty to Christ and to his church.

Do not let anyone imagine that Christ meant these words only for people who are already Christians. No, indeed! They come with the same force, or, indeed, with perhaps more force, to those of you who have as yet made no effort to do the will of God. I come to you with the question: Will you obey Christ? Or will you obey your own will, your own appetites, your own sinful desires? The choice is upon you, and you cannot escape it. If

you follow your own sinful path Christ has declared that there is only one outcome—"the wages of sin is death." And if you choose sin rather than Christ, the ultimate issue is eternal remorse.

But I thank God that for the backslidden Christian and for the sinner conscious of guilt this is not the day of judgment but the day of mercy, and you may come this day to the throne of grace and find forgiveness for your sins and peace for your wounded heart.

An Alaskan steamer full of gold miners went down last August. As the steamer was sinking two miners, each one with a huge bag of gold dust, came rushing on deck and stood side by side. One man, taking in the situation, promptly threw away his valise containing forty thousand dollars and leaped into the lifeboat and was saved. The other man could not give up his treasure, and in spite of the warning shouts he clung to his heavy bag as he jumped and, falling short, went to the bottom with his clog of gold. Which example are you following?

XXVI

THE DUTY OF CONFESSING CHRIST

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.—*Matthew x*, 32, 33.

CHRISTIANITY is a personal religion. It centers in Jesus Christ. It is not a mere system of philosophy. It is faith in Christ as a Person and as a Saviour. The Bible from one end to the other is a part of the life of Jesus Christ. He is prophesied about and his coming is foretold in its first book, and the scarlet thread that tells of his coming into the world and of his suffering and death to save men from their sins runs through the whole Bible, giving continuity to it all. At first glance the Bible is made up of many books written in different parts of the world and in different ages by men who never saw each other and who could not have understood each other had they met, since they spoke different languages. But the Bible is made one book, and *the Book*, because all these books have some relation to and cluster about the coming and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Starting with Genesis, you are like a man traveling over a vast plateau. At first there is only prairie, but after a while, far away in the distance, you descry faint outlines of a range of mountains. On and on you go—down into Egypt, out of Egypt with Moses, sojourning for a time in the promised land—on and on, until the times of David and the Psalms, when the mountains begin to loom up in the distance. They are still far away, but they are easily seen. Still on you go, through the Bible plateau that is ever climbing upward into Isaiah, and here you feel that at last you have reached the foothills of the great mountains of man's salvation. Looking through Isaiah's telescope of faith, you see the Christ in the distance, and you know the kind of man he is to be and the fate he is to suffer. On through the minor prophets with rapid stride, climbing the heights until at last you reach the summit of the mountains, and on that summit there is a cross, and to that cross is nailed Jesus Christ. And you read over that cross, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." On you go through the New Testament, and it is all about Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles tell how Christ kept his promise with the disciples and sent them the Holy Spirit, and how under their preaching of

Christ and him crucified multitudes were converted. Paul's letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians, and many others, are written to churches that he has founded, to tell them about Jesus, and to build them up in the most holy faith. All the other letters and epistles, not only of Paul, but of John and James and Peter, are written to give glory and honor to Jesus Christ, and that last book in the Bible is a Revelation given to John, the beloved disciple, in which Jesus speaks his last words until he shall speak to us in heaven. You see it all gathers about Jesus Christ.

Now all this is very significant and has everything to do with the study of our theme. The Christian religion is not a mere system of ethics. A man cannot say, "I am living a very good kind of a life," and feel that therefore he has done all he needs to do. The question comes back at once, What have you done with Jesus Christ? Have you done your duty toward Jesus? It is a personal religion. What is your personal attitude toward Jesus Christ? Have you confessed Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your Lord? That is the question of questions, and nothing else counts until that is settled. You may be living a very moral sort of a life, but if every hour of your life is either directly or indirectly an act of the basest ingratitude to Jesus Christ, who died for you on the cross,

then your morality is all vitiated and you will have nothing with which to excuse yourself when you stand in judgment before God.

Suppose a man should take a beautiful woman and lead her to the altar of the church and make her his wife through marriage. He promises that he will love and cherish her in sickness and in health, so long as they both do live. And then he goes away from the marriage altar and deserts her. He goes off into a distant country, holds no communication with her; weeks, and months, and years go by; there are no letters, no confession of her as his wife, no support. Would it be enough to say to that woman as an excuse for his conduct that he has lived a very good kind of a life all the time that he has been away from her? He has not stolen, he has not blasphemed, and he has been known generally as a very honest, good kind of a man. Would that be any excuse whatever to the wife who has given her love, and plighted her troth, and has had a right during all these years that he should openly confess himself as her husband and give her his affection and support? You know that would be no excuse. It would only seem to add to the enormity of the man's sin. You would say, If a man has enough sense and will-power to live as good a life as that, what excuse is there for his treating his wife with such shameful neglect?

Now, that is a very clear illustration of our case, except that the case against you for neglecting Jesus Christ is even more serious than that. It is a stronger case than the one I have mentioned. Christ has done more for you than any wife ever did for a husband. Christ, with all the wealth and glory of heaven, with all the association and fellowship of the angels, laid by his glory and his honor and came down to earth and suffered and died in your behalf. Now he asks your confession, that you shall recognize him personally as your Saviour. And yet you go on for years with indifference to his claims, and when you are approached about it you say, "O, I'm not such a bad man, after all. True, I am not a Christian exactly, but live pretty nearly as well, possibly better, than some Christians." And you actually feel a little proud of that statement. Yet every day for all these years you have been acting ingratitude so shameful that if it were a case of one of your neighbors toward another neighbor it would shock you in the extreme. My friends, it is unworthy of you that you should go on showing this ingratitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have heard more people here in New York say that they are trying to live Christian lives, who yet are failing to give Christ the benefit of an open confession by joining the church, than in all my

ministry prior to this time. This often comes about through a man or a woman coming to the city from some interior town and being a little uncertain at first about permanent settlement here. So they drift about from one church to another and wait for some future time to decide what they will do. At home they felt the responsibilities of the church and the power of being openly committed to Christ and his cause, which is of such value to all of us. But now they are like children out of school. They have no pastor and there are no church members to whom they feel any sense of responsibility. There is a sort of guilty sense of freedom about it. They can go where they please, and do what they please, and there is nobody to ask any questions. There are tens of thousands of people in this great city who started here just like that, having no expectation of losing their peace with God, who are to-night without God and without hope in the world and have become utterly worldly and prayerless, and a multitude more have been here from one to five years without transferring their membership and are on their road to the same destiny unless some message like that which I bring you to-night shall be given power by the Holy Spirit to recall them to their duty.

As the late Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock said a little

while before he died, a man who is trying to be a Christian is robbing both the church and Jesus Christ by staying outside of the church. You all very well know that if everyone who believes in Christ and tried to live his life were to do as you do who remain without, the church would all go to pieces and there would be no churches, no Sunday schools, no Christian marriage, no Christian burial. And then, very soon, there would be no hospitals, no almshouses, no orphan asylums—for these all owe their birth to the Christian church and you cannot find one of them on earth except where the story of the Good Samaritan has gone. Now, by staying outside of the church of Christ your conduct is saying just as plainly as words could put it, "I do not care whether the church of Christ lives or dies."

And you are robbing the Lord Jesus if by his help you are living a life that is better and purer and stronger than it would be without him and yet not confessing him. What a strange inconsistency that you should deny your Lord here when the invitation is given to confess him before men, and then go home and pray to him before you lie down to sleep. You have no right to study the life of Jesus and his word, and make your life better and truer thereby, and then refuse to Christ the influence which would come through your publicly con-

fessing him by uniting with the church. To stay out of the church is not only to rob the church but to rob Christ himself. "It is his household of faith, his body, his bride. He has identified himself with it in such wonderful intimacy that, when Saul struck at the church, Jesus said, 'Why persecutest thou me?' There is no escaping the fact that, when you withhold your public allegiance from the church of Christ, your name from its roll call, your loyalty and sympathy and interest and strength from its service, you are robbing the Redeemer of the church. It is the church of Christ, and bears his name in the world, and what you do to the church is done to Christ, and what you refuse the church you refuse Christ."

Then think of the privileges you are excluding yourself from by refusing to confess Christ. I have now been in the ministry for a good many years. For thirty years I have been watching these things, and I have never seen one victorious, triumphant Christian, one who had been commanding power and influence, that remained outside of the church. Confess the Lord Jesus Christ. Commit yourself to him. Run Christ's flag up to the mast-head of your life, and then you can claim Christ's promise that if you will confess him on earth he will confess you in heaven.

I do not doubt if I were to come to some of you

this evening and ask you to make a public confession of Jesus you would say, "I am not good enough," or "I am not fit." How absurd that is when you stop to reflect on it! It is like saying, "I do not know enough to go to school," or "I am not athlete enough to go to a gymnasium," or, "I cannot swim well enough to go to a swimming teacher." You know a boy goes to school just because he is ignorant; he goes to the gymnasium because he is not an athlete; he goes to the swimming master because he cannot swim. So when you tell me you are not good enough to begin to be a Christian, my reply is, "It is not your goodness, it is Christ's goodness." Take a good look at Christ to-night. Is he worthy that you should confess him as your Saviour and your Lord? If that is so, give him your confession to-night, and trust to his honor, which has never been broken, that he will forgive your sins and save your soul.

If I were to go to some others you would say, "I will be a Christian some day, but I am not ready yet." My friend, that means that you are in a most dangerous situation. Some one well says, "To-morrow is the road to Never." It is impossible to make decisions for to-morrow. To-day is the time for decisions. Act now, to-night, and everything that is good enough to be true is possible for your soul. Let things you don't understand take

care of themselves. Just fix your eyes on Jesus. Come to him.

A man who has been an unbeliever for many years was recently led out of the darkness of infidelity and became a very happy Christian. He wrote a little poem telling how he found light:

"I have tried in vain a thousand ways
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise;
But what I need, the Bible says,
Is Jesus.

"My soul is night, my heart is steel,
I cannot see, I cannot feel,
For light, for life, I must appeal
To Jesus.

"He died, he lives, he reigns, he pleads,
There's love in all his words and deeds,
There's all a guilty sinner needs
In Jesus.

"Though some should sneer, and some should blame,
I'll go with all my guilt and shame,
I'll go to him because his name
Is Jesus."

XXVII

THE MAN WITH A BAD EYE

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.—*Luke xi, 34.*

CHRIST compares the eye to the conscience and the light of the world about us to the spiritual light which falls from his word and from the direct working of the Holy Spirit on our consciences. It is a very interesting illustration. If the human eye is protected and cared for and given proper exercise and training it is a marvelous machine. Science has never found anything to equal the mechanism of the human eye. But the eye, in order to do its work well, must be used, and it must be protected from injury. It is very delicate and very sensitive. It takes a very small thing to put it out of order. I remember once going out on a flat car attached to a passenger train when coming around the rapids of the famous Cascades of the Columbia. The scenery is among the finest in the world, and I was expecting a most enjoyable experience. But as we started off a little cinder from the locomotive, not so large as the head of a pin, lighted in one of my eyes, and it so darkened it and aroused such

sympathy in the other that I clung for dear life to a stanchion on the car and passed the entire seven miles through that wonderland of beauty without even a glimpse of it. When the cinder was removed I was astonished to see that it was only a little mote, but it had closed all the world for me. Because of it the mountains were as though they were not and the waterfalls lost all their attraction and their beauty. My light was changed to darkness because for the time my eye was evil.

Now, our Saviour says that it is like that with the conscience. God speaks to us through the conscience as the world of nature speaks to us through the eye. Through the Bible, through his providential action in our daily life, and through the voice of the Spirit speaking to our inmost self, God is giving us light. He thus enlightens our understanding. He arouses our affections. He inspires and stirs the will toward action. Our emotions are warmed into being. I do not mean to indicate by this that God will ever do this to such an extent that a man cannot resist and will be compelled to be good. That would be contrary to all the Bible teaching. And we need to remember that in our prayer for other people. We must not think that God does not answer our prayers when we pray earnestly and faithfully for the conversion of friends and they yet remain unconverted. There is a

point beyond which even Almighty God cannot go in dealing with a human soul. He cannot force our will. If he could do that, then we should only be like a cog in a wheel. We could not help ourselves and would not be accountable or responsible for what we did. But each one of us is conscious that, though we may be greatly moved upon by influences without us and within us, there remains in our own hearts, in our own wills, the power to choose. And so all we can do is to pray God to move upon the heart, to arouse the conscience, and to speak to the inmost soul of our friend and give him or her once again the chance to choose. But notwithstanding these prayers, and despite the moving of the Spirit of God, it is possible for a man or a woman surrounded by the most gracious influences to close the eye of the conscience and steel the heart against the divine urging and be lost at last.

The human eye is capable of great development. The eye that is carefully cherished and steadily cultivated becomes very far-reaching in its power and capable of seeing with wonderful accuracy. The same is true of the eye of the soul. If from childhood the conscience is developed by prayer and study of the Bible and meditation which listens for the voice of the Spirit, so that a man is ever ready to obey the voice of God, the conscience becomes radiant with light, illuminating the whole

nature of the man. You remember that among the early preachers of Christ Philip was very popular in a certain city, and was having great success and making many converts. But he was suddenly made to feel that the Spirit desired him to go away into the desert, and he went without murmuring or questioning, and it was while he was there that the treasurer of Queen Candace came driving along in his chariot, and again it was no outward voice, but the Spirit speaking in Philip's conscience, that told him to join himself with this man for special duty. As he came up beside the chariot, he found that the man was reading from the book of Isaiah a prophecy concerning Christ. He inquired of the man if he understood what he was reading. The treasurer then begged him to come up and sit with him in his chariot, and Philip took that prophecy for his text, and did not leave him until he was happily converted to Christ. Now, Philip was sensitive to the Spirit. His eye was single in doing the right; to serve God and do his will was the single great purpose of his life. There was nothing to darken his soul. No selfishness obstructed the sunshine, and so his conscience was sensitive to God's voice.

There is something quite significant in this phraseology of the text, "When thine eye is single." If a man simply wants to know what is right, if a man is honestly seeking the truth and does not fail to

act on the truth when he finds it, then spiritual light will flood his soul ; but if a man is unwilling to face the truth, or if, finding the truth, he will not act upon it, conscience is darkened. By refusing to do the right when we know it we gradually lose the power to discern the right, so that after a while the spiritual judgment becomes so warped and the soul so full of darkness that we see men and women who were once of good moral intelligence calling good evil and evil good. The eye was not single, but partial, and so its power of discernment was destroyed.

Dr. Robert South says that every single gross act of sin is much the same thing to the conscience that a great blow or fall is to the head ; its stun bereaves it of all use of its senses for a time. Thus David's murder and adultery so mazed and even stupefied his conscience that it lay as it were in a swoon and void of all spiritual sense for almost a whole year. For we do not find that he came to himself or to any true sight or sense of his horrid guilt till Nathan the prophet came and roused him up with a message from God. Such a terrible deadness and stupefaction did those two sins bring upon his soul that there is no evidence that David had for many months any keen conception of the horrible character of his conduct. The reason of this was that his conscience had been stunned and could not so much as open

its eyes so as to be able to look either upward or inward. This was his sad and forlorn condition notwithstanding he had been graciously taught of God all his life. He was now past the fiftieth year of his age, and yet this one falling into sin so deadened the spiritual principle within him and left him so benumbed and blind and insensible that if it had not been for the special message of God through the voice of Nathan he would no doubt have never been recovered and would have died unrepentant and unforgiven.

Now, it may be that I am speaking to some one here who has been stricken by some besetting sin that has separated you from the peace of God and broken all connection between your heart and heaven, as David's sins did for him. If that is so, I pray God that he may commission me as he did Nathan, and that the Holy Spirit may use the message this evening, and stand before the doorway of your soul, and say with power to start you to action the words that broke the deadly lethargy of the sinning king, "Thou art the man!"

There is another sort of danger to the human eye that comes more slowly. Sometimes a film grows over the eye and covers it. It does not make a man blind all at once. I have a friend who has been slowly getting blind for ten years, and he can yet see a little, though very dimly. So it is often the

case that actual sin and refusal to obey God's commandments gradually obscures and darkens the light of the conscience. Doing wrong and repeating the act over and over brings a film over the eye of the soul. Being aroused to see one's duty, having the emotions stirred, being impressed with Christ's claims, and yet refusing to grant them, produces gradually but surely a cataract on the eye of the soul that no human power can remove. Jeremiah sets forth clearly the deadly character of such a habit of evil when he says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

I am sure that I speak to some of you this evening who have already the film growing over the eye of your conscience. You are not afraid of sin as you once were. Evil things do not shock you as they once did. You imagine sometimes that the reason for this is that they are really not so bad as you thought they were. There you mistake. The sin is just as bad as ever; but there has grown a film over your spiritual eyesight, so that you see now but dimly what you saw more clearly in your childhood and early youth. You are slowly growing blind. As over my friend's eyes the film has been growing that shuts out the light of heaven and makes it impossible for him longer to behold with any clearness

the people whom he meets, so your disobedience to God's law has gradually caused a film to come over the eye of your soul, and you have but to go on until morally you will become entirely blind, and will call good evil and evil good.

When a cataract forms over the eye there is only one source of help, and that is a most skillful surgeon who can take the obstruction off with a sharp knife and give the eye again the chance to behold the light of day. That is now done, sometimes with wonderful success. In the spiritual world there is only one Physician who has ever been able to do that—Jesus Christ. But he has that power. He who opened the eyes of many blind men during his earthly ministry has power to remove the cataract from the eye of the soul and make your conscience sensitive and clear, so that it shall behold the spiritual light and flood the soul again with its knowledge. Thank God, you may have the services of this Great Physician, and have them freely this very hour. He said of himself that he came as a Physician to the sick. And just because you need him sorely he will fly to your aid at your cry for help.

XXVIII

THE GREATEST THIEF

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming,—*Matthew* xxiv, 48.

SOME one has well said that the value put upon time indicates the high or low water mark of any civilization. The American Indian counted time only by suns and moons. No barbarous people have ever had any timepiece, and it is only the highly developed and cultivated civilization which measures time by seconds. Booker Washington says it marked a great epoch in his advancement and in the growth of his manhood when he began to observe regular hours for his meals.

This element of timeliness and the importance of promptness in doing our duty runs through all our lives, and we never can escape from it. A prominent minister recently stated in a public address that he shook his fist at the chapel bell when it was ringing for the last recitation of his academic course and said, "I have been ruled by that bell seven long years; but, thank God, I am free to-day." He soon found out his mistake. The moment he plunged into his lifework he found that he was more than ever under obligation to measure every

hour, and carefully guard all the moments, and observe every appointment of duty.

The Bible lays tremendous emphasis on our being prompt in our decisions and decisive in all our actions. Scattered all through the Bible are the words, "now," "immediately," "straightway," and other words of the same import. And this is not unnatural, for all life is pervaded with this importance of prompt and decisive action. You let any clerk get into the habit of being ten minutes late at his place of business, and he is absolutely out of the race for any great promotion. A feeling of charity in a kind-hearted employer may keep him on for a while, but he will never win success.

Now, all this has to do directly with our theme. This is a striking story which Christ tells here. He presents a man who has been absent from his home and has left it in charge of a servant who is temporarily steward over his whole household. He is gone a long time, but the steward takes care of everything with exactly the same fidelity that he would have shown if the master had been present, so that when the master comes home he finds everything in first-class condition and bestows on the servant great reward.

Then our Lord turns to the other side and tells us a story of another kind of servant. He had exactly the same opportunity that was given to the first,

but he said within himself, "My lord delayeth his coming," and so he began to do as he pleased. He gave himself up to pleasure and to riot. He was careless as to whether his life and conduct were such as would be pleasing to his master. And so, one day when he was not thinking about it, when everything was at loose ends, his master came back, and his punishment of that servant was grievous.

Now, the message is very simple, and it ought to be very profitable to us. The greatest thief in the world is delay. I speak to many of you this evening who know enough of the Gospel and believe sufficiently in Jesus Christ to be saved if you would act at once on your knowledge and obey Christ. The lack of decision is the cause of the doom of thousands. This is true in every department of life. Goethe says that there are three essential elements of any strong and moving story. It must illustrate enterprise, it must involve the incurring of peril, and it must result in the achievement of success. You cannot make anything moving and heroic out of the lives of men who took no risks and always sailed so near the shore that they could easily swim to land in the event of disaster to their craft. Mr. Beecher used to say that the most dangerous thing that happens to any man is coming into the world at all; but having come, and being here at all, you find yourself in conditions in which

there are no "dead certainties." You simply have to act with your best judgment upon the light you have, and take the consequences. Now, I do not believe there is a man here to-night who would not become a Christian at once, before leaving the house, if he acted on his judgment as a wise man acts in other things. It is the power of prompt decision that makes the difference between success and failure every day in the week.

When Balzac's father tried to discourage his son from the pursuit of literature he said to him, "Do you know that in literature a man must be either a king or a beggar?" "Very well," replied the boy, "I will be a king." His disgusted parent left him to his fate in a garret; but he had made his decision, and he fought his way to victory. So there have been men whose companions have said to them, "To be a great Christian is a fine thing, but to fail at it as some people do is disgusting." And the young man has said with decision, "By the help of God I will be a genuine Christian," and has gone forth from that hour to the peace and happiness, the struggles and victories, of a noble Christian life.

Lord Rosebery not long ago reminded his fellow-countrymen of what he calls their great national danger. He says it is "self-complacency." However that may be with the English nation, I am sure it is true of a great many people who are letting

the years go by without becoming Christians. Because God has been so kind as to hedge your life about with praying parents and Christian friends, so that you have been kept mercifully from falling into outbreaking and shameful sins, you have a certain pride and self-complacency about your condition, when it is quite probable that at the heart you are farther from God and are in greater danger of being lost than is some poor drunkard or discouraged woman whom you count as a much greater sinner than yourself. Surely there are no sadder cases than these men and women who have had the Gospel light shining about them through all their lives, and who know their duty, and yet self-complacently take their own time, and fancy that their Lord delays his coming and that there is no need that they should make haste. I would to God that I knew how to arouse you and make you see your danger!

There is an old story of two painters who were frescoing a magnificent cathedral. One of them had just finished a very artistic figure, and had stepped back to survey it. So absorbed was he that he forgot the high scaffolding upon which he stood. He was standing on the very edge. One move more and he must be hurled to death. His companion saw his danger, but dared not speak lest he should lose his balance. As a last resort he seized a wet

brush and flung it against the wall, spattering the beautiful picture with unsightly blotches of coloring. The imperiled man sprang forward to save his work, but it was too late; it was gone. He turned upon his friend to upbraid him, when he was told of the death he had escaped. And then, with tears of gratitude, he blessed the hand that saved him even at such a cost. O that I could so arouse you out of this deadly lethargy, this self-complacency which is putting your immortal soul in peril, and win you to accept Christ and give your heart to him! I know you would thank me forever for that greatest of all blessings one human being can bestow upon another.

Delay is perilous from every standpoint. It is not only that life is uncertain and may be cut off at any moment. Even if life be prolonged there is no certainty that the Spirit of God will ever strive with your soul again as he is striving now. Never again may you have an opportunity so favorable to accepting Christ and receiving the pardon of your sins as you have this very hour.

Dr. John Watson tells an exceedingly interesting and touching story of an event which occurred in his own ministry. He was called to go and see a young man who was ill. When he went into the room the young man said, "Now, I have heard you preach, and I wanted to see you. I do not want to

be a humbug, and I will tell you the situation. There were days in the past when I wished to be a Christian, but I thought that, on the whole, I would rather have a few years to myself. I have not made a beast of myself, but it has been a selfish life. Now I am dying, and although the doctors will not tell me the truth, I know I will die within a few days." And he did die within a few days. He told Dr. Watson a number of things he wanted him to do for him, and he promised to attend to them. Then the minister said to him, "What about other things?" Then the young man responded sadly, "I have thought it all over, and I have led a selfish life, and I have done mean things sometimes, but I will not do the meanest thing I could conceive—take the last three days of my life and offer them to Christ when I have had twenty-three years of life that I used for myself." From that position Dr. Watson could not move him by any argument he knew or used, and the man died without any hope in Christ and expressing the infinite regret that he had not accepted Christ when he was well and strong.

My friends, do you intend to follow that example? Surely you do not wish to do that. Then why will you not act now? Now while your heart is tender, while your conscience is awake, now is the time to accept Christ and be forgiven. This may

be the greatest hour in the history of the world for you, and it will be if you make it the hour of your salvation.

I feel very keenly that it is a critical moment for some souls. One of the great poets saved some of his most lofty visions by leaping out of bed and seizing pen and paper to preserve the thought which came to him in the silent watches of the night, and which he knew if allowed to escape could never be recalled on any to-morrow. There is a time when the harbor is open, when the wind is blowing, when the tide is running in, and everything speeds the ship through the channel into the haven of rest. This is such an hour, and such an opportunity. Delay not, but decide and act.

XXIX

CHRIST'S BUSINESS IN HEAVEN

In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—*John xiv, 2, 3.*

TAKE it all in all, there never was a more remarkable statement than this made by anyone in human form. Here is a man who is being intrigued against, and hounded by his enemies, and who admits that he is soon to be put to death, and that the cruel death of the cross, and yet he talks about it with all the calmness and courage of a conqueror who has achieved the purposes intended by a great campaign and is now taking his departure to the great kingdom from whence he came. Christ tells his disciples that they are not to permit their hearts to give way to trouble, for he has overcome the world, and through him they shall overcome. Although he departs from them, he will not lose interest in them, and he will never go beyond the power to reach them with aid and comfort. Heaven is his native homeland, and from that central capital of the universe he will send forth messengers with comfort and blessing to them. What-

soever they ask of the Father in his name will be granted.

But there is another significant statement in our text which sets forth the important business of Christ in heaven as related to us. Christ assures these troubled disciples that heaven is a splendid reality. He calls heaven the "Father's house," and says that there are many mansions. Then follows a very beautiful and loving touch that is just like Jesus. He says, "If it were not so, I would have told you." The more you study that phrase the more beautiful it will seem to you. Its meaning is evident. If there had been no heaven, no land of beauty and glory, for which God was redeeming and developing and training his sons and daughters, Christ would have told us. He would not have let us go on hoping and wishing and longing for the immortal life, wondering if there was a future and if that future was kind, unless it were true. With what hope this fills our hearts. It gives us the right to believe that anything we hope for and long for in our thoughts of heaven shall be true if it is good enough to be true. You need not dream about some loved desire concerning heaven and then say sadly, "It is too good to be true," for if it is good enough to be true it may be yours if you are true to God. I am sure that our Saviour, who is fitting up heaven for us, will meet the long-

ings of every true heart. Better even than our longings and our dreams shall be the realization if we are faithful to Christ. Perhaps you have seen the little poem written by Henry Rowe voicing the old Scotch mother's query, "Will the Heather Bloom in Heaven?"

"The sunset rays were falling across
The slopes of the Grampian hills,
And the deepening shades 'mid the firs and moss
Were shrouding the rocks and rills.
In a cottage set on the edge of the glen,
By the side of the sobbing sea,
A soul was passing beyond the ken
Of the world to eternity.

"'O! laddie,' she whispered, 'in heaven above
D'ye think that the heart of God
Would find delight in the flowers we love,
That bloom from the highland clod?
Amid all the beauty up there, dear lad,
D'ye think that he'll find some room
In the fields of glory to make us glad
With heather and with broom?

"'Will the bonnie Scotsman have a ham
'Mid lakes and the craggy glen?
Will the love of my laddie be the same,
Only stronger, dear heart, then?
And among the robes of the ransomed, lad,
Which the angel spirits wear,
Must we always miss the highland plaid
When we cross the moors up there?

CHRIST'S BUSINESS IN HEAVEN 277

“ ‘Will the bagpipes play on the streets of gold?
Will the skylark greet the morn?—
O! I love them all, for I’m growing old
In the hame where I was born.
O laddie, my heart is sair awry,
I’m only a puir, weak lass,
But I fear me I’ll breathe a homesick sigh
As through heaven’s glad gate I pass.’

“The whisper ceased, and the life went out
With the dying light of day,
But the sainted soul we cannot doubt
Has found its heavenward way;
And we may believe in those distant fields,
Which the hand of God has sown,
The Scottish heather its beauty yields
Not far from the great white throne.”

There is something very comforting in the way Christ makes the statement here that the great purpose of his leaving the earth and taking up his abode in heaven was that he should there look after the interests of the men and women on earth who have confessed his name and are seeking day by day to live in a way pleasing to him. These were by no means ideal men to whom Christ was speaking. Peter had yet in him those seeds of disloyalty that led him to deny his Lord, and Thomas had in him the doubt that gave him those awful days of gloom after Christ’s death and resurrection. But, imperfect as they were, they had turned their faces honestly, seeking to know Christ and to do his will,

and Christ knew that through his kindness and loving sympathy they would come to be grand and noble men, fitted for heaven and eternal glory. So Christ looks at you to-night. And while he sees all your sinfulness, and knows all the rough edges of your hot and fiery temper, knows every rotten spot of self-indulgence there is in your nature, and while it looks more horrible to him than it does to you, he also sees what you do not—that through his love and forgiveness and divine culture there may be developed in you a pure and holy man or a noble and saintly woman with whom the angels will be glad to associate in heaven. As Michael Angelo took the old refuse block of marble that many a poorer sculptor had rejected because it had a flaw in it, and chiseled from it his matchless David which stands on the heights above Florence—dared to choose it because he saw what his skill and genius could bring out of it in spite of its flaws—so Jesus Christ sees that though your temper be as quick and your disposition as erratic as Simon Peter's, and though your blood is as hot for sudden anger as John's, and though you be as ready to doubt and have "the blues" as Thomas, his divine genius can make out of you Peter, "the Rock," or John, "the beloved disciple."

So if you will this night turn your face toward Christ, and humbly give your heart to him in re-

pentance and faith, he will lay in heaven the foundation of a mansion for you. For that is Christ's great business in heaven. He is there preparing places for his people. No city on earth is growing like heaven. The mansions are going up as they are being ordered from all over the world. How many have begun to build during the last few weeks on orders breathed from the prayerful lips and humble broken hearts of those kneeling about this altar! And Christ is ready to start others tonight. When the foundation of a new mansion in heaven is laid there is great joy about it. There is no selfishness about Christianity. The citizens of heaven are not afraid that the city will be overcrowded, and the angels watch with glad hearts and joyous eyes the turning of a face toward heaven. Jesus says that there is joy among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, and the moment a man turns from his sin and seeks to follow Christ it is in reality the beginning of a journey toward heaven, and as he journeys thither his home is preparing for him.

What a home that will be! I suppose none of us has ever had a home that exactly suited. I have never seen one that I would not change if it could be done without any expense or annoyance. I have had the privilege in Europe of looking over many of the famous old palaces, some of which have played a

great part in history ; the homes where kings were born, and lived, and feasted, and ruled, and died. But I never saw a palace so splendid but what, if I were to move into it, and undertake to make a home of it, I should want to change it a good deal. We are hard to suit in the matter of homes. We know that by the way people move about in this city. Every week we see thousands moving from one street to another, from one apartment house to another. People stop a while, and then move on, leaving the ills they have to dare other ills they know not of. But if you will give your heart to Christ, and become his true and sincere friend, some of these days you shall have a home that you will never become tired of for a single hour. Christ knows exactly what you need. He is the only one in the world who knows all your little peculiarities, and he will fit your individuality in your heavenly home. How tender those words of promise that as one whom his mother comforteth God will comfort those that trust him ! You may depend upon it that if you will give up your heart to follow Christ the home which he will fit for you in heaven will satisfy all your needs. Your fondest dreams shall be more than met in your heavenly home.

And then this other promise, what infinite sweetness breathes from it—"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you

unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Christ is lonely in heaven without us. He wants us with him. Repent of your sins and ask for forgiveness, and his love will envelop you with great strong arms of kindness, and he will lead you onward and upward until he receives you in heaven at last. This takes away all the bitterness and all the dark forebodings about death. Without Christ, and a hope of heaven made clear and definite through him, death is an awful thing. I do not wonder that death has been called "the king of terrors," for it is an awful leap into the dark without Christ. But the moment you open your heart to this loving promise of Christ's the morning breaks and the shadows flee away. Death will come to us as it does to other people, but Christ will come with it, and he will receive us unto himself. And all our loved ones who have loved Christ, who have gone on before us—they, I am sure, will come with him when he comes to bid us welcome. When I went to California two or three years ago to visit the old home fireside, as the train pulled up at the little country station there stood my father with his long white beard, and my mother, and my sisters, waiting to meet me and to give me welcome. How precious it was to meet them thus on the way, at the very threshold of the home farm. So it will be with the heavenly meeting. If I were to go

back to that little country station now, that white-haired father would not be there to meet me. And as I looked into the faces of the others the tears would come into all our eyes because of his absence. But if death should come to me to-night, and I should go out on the last journey, I know that, standing beside my Saviour and his, I should find my father, and my own little boy, and a great throng of loved ones to whom I have said farewell and whom Christ has been receiving into the heavenly home through all these years.

Dear friends, we want you with us; with all our hearts we long to persuade you to accept our Lord and know the tender love and comfort which has been the sweetest thing that has ever come into any of our lives. He has loved you, and redeemed you, and if you will confess him to-night, and turn from your sin, all the comforts of his grace and all the glories of heaven may be yours.

XXX

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.—*Mark iii, 29.*

THIS is a sad and solemn theme. Sin is the tragedy of the world. It casts its black clouds athwart the sky and shuts out the sun. It turns life's sweetest honey into gall. No life is so full of youthful promise that its poison cannot change it into an old age bitter and revolting. And here we are face to face with sin at its climax. What is this unpardonable sin?

When we undertake to look for an answer we must look at the remark which St. Mark, who writes the story, adds immediately following the quotation from Christ. That shows us what it was that drew out the remark in regard to the unpardonable sin. Mark says that Jesus said this because the Pharisees were saying, "He hath an unclean spirit." Jesus had been working a series of miracles which every unbiased mind could see were divine. They were wrought by the power of God. The Holy Spirit's presence was in every one of them. As men looked on these miracles the first honest words that sprang to their lips were, "Is not this the Son

of God?" Now, the Pharisees believed also that Jesus had divine power. But if they yielded to that conviction, and let the popularity of Christ spread everywhere among the common people, their own power was gone, and the perfect purity and genuineness of Christ would shame the hollow formalism of their daily lives. They determined therefore, at any cost, even if they had to sacrifice truth and honesty, that they would stamp out this growing faith in the hearts of the common people, which would soon center with great force on Christ. Hence they began with one accord to declare among the people that the miracles which Christ had been working were not the work of the Holy Spirit, but the work of the devil. It was a reckless piece of business. They knew they were lying. But they set their teeth together and went on, determined not to yield to Christ. They knew the truth, but they closed their eyes against it, and vowed it was not the truth, but falsehood. Now it was this that drew out Christ's remark about the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, a sin which could never be forgiven. It was opposition to truth and goodness on the part of men who knew better, but who determined to pursue the false way because it pleased their own selfishness. This interpretation is entirely supported by another saying of Christ's on the same subject, when he says,

“Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him, that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.”

An English minister, Rev. Henry T. Hooper, whose comment on this subject I have been recently reading, raises these very pertinent questions in regard to this incident: Had these men already committed the unpardonable sin? Is it an act of sin or is it a state of sin that we are to regard as hopeless? Were these men already doomed, or were they as yet but nourishing a tendency which was in the direction of despair? A single act of sin indicates an evil state of character; an act of sin repeated indefinitely and of set purpose indicates an evil state of character which is in the way of becoming permanent. No single incident, perhaps, of blasphemy was unpardonable; had the incidents been so multiplied and so aggravated by deliberate repetition as to have become a settled habit which was already irreparable?

These are questions only important to us as they throw light on our own danger and warn us of the possibility of coming to such a state of hopelessness.

Suppose a man among us, religiously nurtured from childhood, inheriting good and holy traditions from a Christian father and mother, and perhaps their fathers and mothers before them—suppose

such a man, so brought up, giving himself to deliberate and repeated sin, knowing it to be sin, against the clear light of conscience deliberately going over to the devil's side; suppose, not content with that, he of set purpose and by deliberate policy seeks to pervert others, and especially to pervert simple, childlike believers, not once only, but by settled and continuous and diabolical falsehoods. Is it too much to say that such a man's case is in the way of becoming hopeless? His very existence is a continual act of sin.

The effect of sin in any sinning man or woman is cumulative. For there is surely a progression in sinfulness as there is in holiness. The man who goes on disobeying God cannot remain as good as he is. He becomes a little harder at heart, a little more dead at conscience, a little less likely to repent and become a Christian every day of his life. At what stage in a sinful man's career his sin reaches the climax when it is unpardonable it is impossible to say. Whatever interpretation of this passage we may adopt, you and I do not know the man so utterly vile and abandoned that we should think him beyond the possibility of pardon. He may exist, but judgment is not with us. Of one thing, however, we are certain—so long as the Gospel message is still attractive, however little, in a sinful man's eyes, this fatal climax has not yet come to

him. Fear of the worst is the last barrier against the arrival of the worst; desire for the best, however feeble that desire may be, is the proof that the best is still possible for us. No man is yet unpardonable who honestly fears that such is the case. But any man who feels that should know that he is up against the last barrier between himself and eternal doom.

No passage of Scripture, perhaps, brings out with clearer outlines the terrible gravity of sin. Sin is an awful thing. It is not a thing to jest about or a thing to dare lightly. In itself now, and in its tendency hereafter, nothing is so unspeakably fatal as sin. I was almost shocked the other day to come face to face with this statement, which at first I thought could not be true, but which on reflection I believe is true, that our Lord's utterances throughout the Gospels are not nearly so often concerned with forgiveness and goodness as with sin and punishment. Not forgiveness and goodness, but sin and punishment, is by far the most frequent theme of his teaching. The good tidings is not always, nor nearly always, concerned with great joy. Rather it is concerned with the revelation of the horror of sin, to save us from which Christ faced the sorrow of the garden of Gethsemane and the agony of the cross on Calvary.

I think the most terrible thing about this study

for us must lie in this reflection, that everyone who is living in known sin is on the way to that fatal climax for which there can be no forgiveness. The essence of the sin of these men to whom Christ was speaking was that they knew the right and refused to accept it, and denied it. And is not that the essence of your sin? Are there not unsaved men and women who are listening to me now who believe that Christ is the divine Saviour and the only Saviour of the world? You believe that the Gospel record of Jesus Christ is true. You believe that he was born and grew up and went forth to his ministry, as taught in the Gospel. You believe that he spake as never man spake; that he suffered the agony of Gethsemane and was nailed to the cross as an atonement for sin. You believe that he burst the bonds of death and, leaving an empty grave, ascended in triumph to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he ever lives to intercede for you. You believe that men who repent of their sins and ask forgiveness of him in faith are pardoned and set free from the bondage of their transgressions. You believe all this, and admit that Christ has a rightful claim for your supreme love and friendship, and yet, believing it all and admitting it all, you go on living as though it were all a falsehood. You live as though Christ had never lived on earth; you treat his claims with indifference,

and day by day the deadly weight of this ingratitude grows and strengthens its grip upon your heart and conscience, making it less and less likely with every recurring day that you will ever repent of your sins and be saved.

It is idle for men and women to imagine that they can slowly and gradually work themselves into a better frame of mind, where they can in an easier way become Christians. It is just as great a folly to wait for some tide of feeling that will overwhelm you with conviction, so that it will be impossible to resist the influence that leads toward Christ. There is not one place in the Bible where you are urged to wait for certain feelings before you repent of your sins. Repentance is urged as a duty; the acceptance of Christ and the obedience to Christ are urged as duty, and you are to do them because they are right. If you wait for such feelings you will never be saved. Act upon the light you have, for you have light enough. Your judgment is convinced; your conscience warns you; follow them and you will be saved.

If I speak to any who fear about themselves that they have passed beyond the reach of pardon, then I assure you that that very fear is the quickening of the Holy Spirit and a pledge that if you will immediately repent you will be forgiven.

A most sinful and profane man at a revival

meeting in Evanston, Illinois, several years ago, was asked to give himself to Christ. He refused to do so, saying, "It would be of no use; I have committed the unpardonable sin." On being asked why, then, he had come to the service, he replied, "Because I want to see these two children of mine saved." His great anxiety for them soon led him to pray audibly in their behalf. The pastor said to him, "Pray for yourself, man! If God will hear you for others he will hear you for yourself." He then began confessing his sins to God, and pleading importunately for mercy. Finally the Lord spoke peace to his soul and he and his daughters went home rejoicing.

There is hope for any man when he can see his sins. When the conscience is blinded so that sin does not seem terrible, then the soul is in its greatest danger. Christ came to save sinners, and he is able to save any sinner who recognizes his sin and turns to him with an honest heart. While Paul was going on in his wicked way, blind to the horror of his sin, there was no hope of his salvation; but when that noonday on the road to Damascus he was stricken down and caught a vision of Christ he regarded himself as the chief of sinners. Then he began to pray, and he was soon rejoicing in salvation. It is not your sins that keep you from being saved. It is because you do not come to

Christ. Christ will not refuse you because you are a sinner.

Mr. Moody used to tell the story of a young man who had a Christian mother who prayed for him, but he was wild and reckless. Finally his mother died, and after her death he began to be troubled. He thought he would get into new company and leave his old companions. So he said he would go and join a secret society; he thought he would join the Odd Fellows. But they made inquiry about him and they found he was a drunken, worthless fellow, so they blackballed him. They would not have him. Then he went to the Freemasons; but he had nobody to recommend him, so they inquired and found there was no good in his record, and they too blackballed him. They did not want him. One day some one handed him a little notice in the street, calling attention to a Christian meeting, and he went in. He heard that Christ had come to save sinners. He believed him; he took him at his word; and, in reporting the matter, he said he "came to Christ without a character, and Christ did not blackball him." As he received that poor man whom nobody else would receive, so he will receive you, and pardon your sins, and give you the peace of heaven in your soul.

XXXI

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.—*Matthew* xxv, 31, 32.

WHAT a contrast between the first coming and the second coming of Jesus Christ to the world! First, he came to be born in the manger of Bethlehem; but when he shall come again it shall be as a royal conqueror. True, angels sang his advent to the shepherds, and a star guided the wise men to his manger crib; but he wore the guise of a helpless babe, and throughout his whole life he was not ministered unto, but himself ministered to the poor and the sick and the weak and the outcast. No doubt when Christ comes again the same angels that sang his praises to the shepherds will be in the retinue that attend the triumphant Lord. They are as young now as they were then. Men and women do not get old in heaven; there is no sickness or pain or weariness or old age, but all its inhabitants have the fervor and enthusiasm of immortal youth. But what glorious memories will those angels have who sung the "Peace on earth and good

will toward men" so long ago, when they come to the final wind-up and judgment upon the world's affairs.

It is a striking thing that Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is to be our judge. We are sure it will be just judgment. Christ never did an unjust thing. During the years of his earthly life his bitterest enemies never claimed that he was unjust. He knows all our case. He has watched over our entire career. We may be certain that there will be no prejudice against us, and no false testimony. If our lives are right and are pleasing to him we are sure of an abundant acquittal and welcome into heaven.

We must be sure, however, that they are right, for not one has ever spoken such words of sternness about sin as Jesus Christ. It was Christ who said to evil men of his time: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." It was Christ that said: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." It was Christ that said: "The light of the body is the eye: there-

fore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness." It was Christ who told the story of the rich man whose farm produced so abundantly, and who in the midst of his rich crops forgot the God who gave them, and said: "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hath provideth? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." I bring forward these sayings of Christ that we may have clearly before us what Christ thinks about sin. For we may be very sure that he who said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," will be the very same when he sits upon the throne of judgment and we stand before him to give our account. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

It is surely the part of wisdom for us to honestly face this question of the judgment. It is idle and foolish for us to put it aside because it disturbs us and makes us gloomy. The Scripture says, "It is

appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." We cannot escape the judgment any more than we can escape death, and our only wise treatment of the subject is to get ready for it, and so fit ourselves that we shall not fear to meet our Saviour there.

This picture of the judgment suggests to us the tremendous importance of our individuality. At the judgment day every man must stand on his own foundation. A righteous wife will not be able to carry a wicked husband out of the throng on the left hand to those on the right. A holy mother will not be able to atone for the misdoings of a prodigal son. Each one standing alone before the great white throne must be judged alone by his own personality. We get so in the habit of judging ourselves in crowds; we think of ourselves as belonging to a club, or a circle, or a community, and so evade the keen sense of responsibility. Even when I preach to you the most heart-searching truths you evade the sharp probe of the truth by considering that there are others in the same position with you. You somehow feel that that lessens your personal responsibility. But at the judgment there will be no possibility of thrusting responsibility aside in that way. Each one will stand on his own personality and must answer to his own deeds. In all the great events of life we are alone. In all

the great solemn decisions of life, in our death, and in our judgment we are alone with God.

I want to call your attention to the fact that in the solemn and awful separations that shall take place at the judgment the basis on which they shall take place is with reference to the personal attitude of each one toward Christ. Listen to the word of Jesus to the righteous who are gathered on his right hand: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

I am sure there is a great deal of false hope built upon that wonderful declaration of Christ. Men and women who have been disobeying Christ

all their lives, who have never confessed him, and who have lived utterly out of harmony with his spirit, are lulling themselves to sleep in self-complacency, imagining that some work of charity they have done will open the doors of heaven at last. It is of such that Christ says he will say in that day, "I never knew you." It was of just such cases as that that Paul was thinking when he said, "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." If we obey the Lord Jesus Christ and give him our hearts in earnest and loving devotion, then every cup of cold water which we give in his name shall have its reward. Our good works toward our fellow-men get their value from our attitude toward Christ. If we love Christ and do what we do for them in loving appreciation of his great love for us and of their brotherhood to Christ, then, indeed, Christ receives each kindly act as though it were done for himself. But let us not forget that first of all we must be right with Christ. Until we have given our hearts to him, until we have obeyed him by an open discipleship, we are still in our sins, unforgiven, and the condemnation of the broken law of God is hanging over our heads.

The personality of the judgment comes out also in the sad and terrible words which Jesus utters to those on the left: "Then shall he say also unto them

on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

No more momentous words than those are printed in any language. And I call upon you again to note that this whole question of the final judgment, according to Christ himself, hinges on our personal attitude toward him. Christian goodness begins first in loyalty to Christ. We were lost in sin, without hope, and Christ ransomed us through his own blood on the cross, and we have no standing before God until we accept the conditions of that ransom and are pardoned through the atonement Christ made for us. We have broken God's law, and not one man or woman among us will be able to come up before the judgment at last and say,

“I have a right to go into heaven, because I have never sinned.” Not one of us will get in in that way. Our one hope there will be that our sins have been blotted out through the atoning blood of the Christ who shall sit on the great white throne to judge us. If we have accepted Christ, and given him our love and our confession, we shall have nothing to fear. For the Judge on the throne will be our friend, and he will keep his word with us, and publicly confess us before his Father and the holy angels. But if we have gone through life rejecting him, and refusing all his invitations of love, then we shall stand speechless and in despair before the judgment throne, and hear those awful words, “Depart from me.”

But I thank God that the judgment day has not yet come, and that this is the day of mercy and of grace, and every one of you may, if you will, make your peace with God through the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus Christ, so that all fear of death and the judgment shall be taken out of your hearts. My friends, do not be storing up wrath against the day of wrath through your carelessness and your sin. One of the terrible things about sin is that we not only hurt ourselves, but that every disobedience to God tends to hurt others who are often very near and dear to us. I think the most terrible agony I have ever witnessed has been that of the fathers or

mothers who felt that their own lack of faithfulness to God had been the ruin of a loved child.

I never shall forget two stories which I once heard Mr. Moody tell. One was the story of a father who lived on the Mississippi River. He was a man of great wealth, yet he would have freely given it all could he have brought back his eldest boy from his early grave. One day that boy had been borne home unconscious. They did everything that man could do to restore him, but in vain. "He must die," said the doctor.

"But, doctor," said the agonized father, "can you do nothing to bring him to consciousness even for a moment?"

"That may be," said the doctor; "but he can never live."

Time passed, and after a terrible suspense the father's wish was gratified. "My son," he whispered, "the doctor tells me you are dying."

"Well," said the boy, "you have never prayed for me, father; won't you pray for my lost soul now?"

The father wept. It was true he had never prayed. He was a stranger to God. And in a little while that soul, unprayed for, passed into its dark eternity.

My friends, are any of you storing up anguish like that by your failure to do your duty to some

who are being influenced by you to forget God and lose their own souls?

This was the other story: A father had a lovely boy, and one day he came home to find him at the gates of death. "A great change has come over our boy," said the weeping mother. "He has only been a little ill before, but it seems now as if he were dying fast." The father went into the room and placed his hand on the forehead of his darling boy. He could see that the boy was dying. He could feel the cold damp of death.

"My son, do you know you are dying?"

"No; am I?"

"Yes; you are dying."

"And shall I die to-day?"

"Yes, my boy, you cannot live till night."

"Well, then, I shall be with Jesus to-night, won't I, father?"

"Yes, my son, you will spend to-night with the Saviour."

As he turned away the boy saw the tears trickling over his father's cheeks.

"Don't weep for me, father," he said; "when I get to heaven I will go straight to Jesus, and tell him that ever since I can remember you have tried to lead me to him."

Do you suppose the wealth of worlds would take

the memory of those words of his dying boy out of that father's heart?

Let us not miss the one great prize! Life is but a short race at best, and no possible success in this world can for one moment repay us for the loss of heaven and everlasting life. Make sure of your title to heaven this very hour!

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